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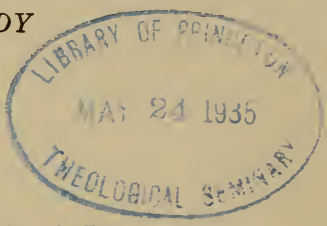
The work of preaching

THE WORK OF PREACHING

A BOOK FOR THE CLASS-ROOM AND STUDY



BY

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TO THE MEN OF MY CLASSES, WHO
HAVE HELPED TO MAKE TEACHING
AN INCREASING PRIVILEGE AND JOY.

PREFACE

THE perpetual function and interest of preaching must be the justification for the appearance of a new book in a field already so well filled. No book of the past, however helpful, can wholly meet the need of a calling that grows in difficulty and importance with every age.

Preaching must be a living voice; like any other form of public speech it must be sensitive to the life of the age. The active, practical spirit of the age, the scientific temper seeking for deeper realities, have made men impatient of the stately and formal correctness of the older sermon and critical of any fixed form of the schools, asking for directness and helpfulness, and, above all, the personal note in preaching.

The Homiletics in use in the schools is largely the expression of the past, much of it perennial as the laws of thought and speech, and much outgrown in the changing life of men. It is right, therefore, that an effort should be made to voice the best pulpit life of to-day; to study and express its ideals and principles of effective

speech. The present volume makes little claim to originality, but does attempt the interpretation of preaching as a living message.

It would be impossible to state the author's indebtedness to the teachers of his youth and to the many writers upon preaching and kindred themes. Many, no doubt, will find echoes of their thought in these pages. But grateful mention must be made of one teacher, the Rev. Dr. Herrick Johnson of Chicago, whose fire has kindled the enthusiasm of a generation of preachers for their chosen work. And grateful acknowledgment is due to the Yale Lecturers on Preaching (the richest contributors to the literature of preaching), and above the long and notable list to the ideal and example of Phillips Brooks.

Every teacher of Homiletics will wish to have his own method; but the book is sent forth with the hope that it may be found helpful as a book of reference and supplemental reading, and that it may find acceptance beyond the walls of the seminary with busy men in the ministry, helping them to measure their work and to renew their ideal of preaching and their faith in its power.

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LECTURE I

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING

OUTLINE

1. The conditions that seem to lessen the importance of preaching.
   - *a* The pulpit is no longer the chief intellectual leader.
   - *b* The pulpit is not always the chief spiritual teacher. The multiplied agencies of instruction and the broadened conception of spiritual life.
2. The forces that seem hostile to preaching.
   - *a* The materialistic spirit of the age; the love of gain and love of pleasure.
   - *b* The social unrest. The industrial changes and the democratic movement.
   - *c* The critical spirit; not irreligious but non-religious. These forces make the work of the preacher hard. Hence the need of a higher conception, the divineness of preaching.
3. The Scripture warrant for preaching.
   - *a* The work of the prophets.
   - *b* The life and word of Christ.
   - *c* The example and teaching of the Apostles.
4. The testimony of the Church.
   - *a* The beginning of the Church.
   - *b* Its victories over heathenism.
   - *c* The enlargement of its life.
   - *d* The spiritual and aggressive eras of Christianity.
   - *e* The higher life of society.
5. The Law of the Incarnation. Spiritual life to be propagated by personal influence. Speech the chief agency: the psychological reason.
6. Hence the perpetuity of preaching.
7. Call to higher conception and more singleness of service.

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LECTURE I

THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING

It seems to be a hard time for the preacher. The habit of church-going has not been maintained, or has not kept pace with our rapidly increasing population, and preachers generally complain of small congregations. The Church has suffered a decline in its conception of preaching, and the world outside hears little call of God in it. The preacher would be more than a man if he were not affected by his environment, and sometimes suffered his enthusiasm to be chilled and the divineness of his work to be somewhat dimmed.

What Forces to-day affect the Pulpit and seem to lessen the Importance of its Work? — The pulpit is no longer the chief intellectual teacher of the community. The newspaper, the magazine, the book, the school, the club, meet the intellectual needs of men. The

preacher is no longer *the parson*, the chief person of the town, but one of many equally well-trained men, whose intellectual life may be largely independent of the pulpit. The growth of education, the diffusion of culture, touches the position and power of the pulpit.

Moreover, the pulpit is not alone nor always supreme as the teacher of *spiritual life*. There has been a widening of the conception of the spiritual life and a great increase of the ways of spiritual teaching. Literature has become the soul's teacher. Poetry, fiction, the essay, feed the higher life of man. The best weekly journals give the Christian interpretation of life, and are found in homes where the voice of the preacher is rarely heard. Essays like those of Mr. Hamilton Mabie or sermons like those of Bishop Phillips Brooks are read by men who rarely hear the preacher's voice.

The trials of the modern pulpit must not all be attributed to a decline in the religious life of the people. That our religious life is passing through a transition no thoughtful man can doubt; that it may be a transition to larger things is the prayer and hope of faith. It may be that the pulpit itself has sometimes failed of the "open vision" and the prophetic spirit.

There are Forces that are distinctly Hostile to Preaching. — We must honestly face these facts, if we would understand our work. We must have an understanding of the times, if we would speak to the hearts of men.

Our age has three characteristics easily discerned: its absorbing interest in this world, its social unrest, and its critical spirit.

Never before was there such interest in all that concerns this world. As in the times of Elizabeth and Raleigh and Shakspere science, inventions, the discovery of new lands, made a new heaven and new earth, and man's life on earth an absorbing drama, so now the more wonderful discoveries and inventions make this world supreme in the thoughts of men. Never before has the earth been so real and so attractive and so much in the possession of men. Whatever concerns the earth and man's place and work on the earth wins the thought of our age. Charles Kingsley called it the most sensuous age since the Goths and Huns overran the Roman Empire. The materialistic spirit is seen in love of gain and love of pleasure, the complements of each other, the action and reaction.

The great opportunities of the New World, the eagerness of its climate, the energy of its

races, have united to emphasize the material side of life. The vast fortunes made in a generation, the increasing number of the good things of this life secured by wealth, have given to it a greater importance and made the industrial development of the race seem to be the supreme thing. Men are practical materialists. They may not reject the doctrine of God and the spiritual life, — they may conform to the religious habits of Christianity, — but they practically reject the practice of God and the spiritual life. The world of the senses is very real — the world of the spirit is vague and unreal. The mind of the age is prepossessed, and the messenger of the spiritual may find it difficult to gain attention to his message.

And then a growing love of pleasure is characteristic of our national life. No doubt it is in part a wholesome reaction from the undue seriousness of our Puritan ancestors, a necessary demand of the nature of man, in part also the removal of our isolation and the enlarging of our experience in contact with other people's and social ideals; but in a still larger degree it is a result of the dominance of the senses and our strenuous industrial life. Men must find relief from the pressure and monotony of the minute division of work and from the congested

conditions of great cities; the instinct of play asserts itself, and the demand for recreation breaks the old bonds of social and religious habits, and makes a transitional, if not critical, time in American life. The crowds of youth dancing on public platforms with the light-heartedness of Southern Europe, the million people that go out of New York every pleasant Sunday, by rail and steamer and wheel, for their weekly holiday, are a warning and a challenge to the pulpit that it has to do with new conditions. It is not easy for a preacher to get the ear of a people bent upon pleasure.

Blended with these materialistic forces, partly their outcome, partly directed by a higher spirit, is the *social unrest* of the time. The teachings of Christianity, united with the Industrial Revolution, tend to break the power of privilege and precedent and give strength to the democratic movement, the effort to assert and gain the rights of the "downmost" man. The loosening of old populations and ties, the rapid influx of foreign peoples, the rapid growth of cities, the widespread organization of industry, have lessened the personal relation in toil and rapidly separated men into industrial classes. Work, the means of training and expression, of personal relation and helpful-

ness, is now too often the occasion of suspicion, and envy, and contention. The Church in America, the voluntary system supported by the offerings of individuals, is naturally affected by the commercial forces of the time, finds its support and control largely in the prosperous classes, and consequently is regarded with suspicion or indifference by the multitude of toilers. We must face the facts. Organized labor is practically outside the Church. The one hundred thousand Bohemians in Chicago, descendants of the men of Huss, have no use for the preacher. These men will applaud the name of Christ and hiss the Church. How shall we speak to the men, our brethren in the redemption of Christ, who feel that their social redemption lies outside of the Church? We might use the figure of Carlyle, and say that the preacher should take the spectacles off his nose and see what are the real Satanas, the soul-devouring monsters of our time. And I shall speak of one other force that seems hostile to the pulpit, even at the danger of making a sombre beginning to our study of preaching.

It is a *critical age*. The scientific method and temper affect the thinking of men. The foundations of belief are reëxamined. Institutions

and creeds are studied in the light of their development. The inductive study of nature and the life of man is applied to the Bible, and traditional views of its composition and inspiration are modified. This at once affects the popular thought as to the authority of the preacher. The variant voices of the pulpit have also given reason to the questioning spirit. Diverse interpretations of Scripture, opposing systems of doctrine, cannot be equally the Word of God. Why should men listen to the preacher? How does he know more than others what God requires of us? It is not that men are irreligious, but that the critical spirit has made them uncertain, even doubtful whether the questions so easily discussed by the preacher can be known. Many men give up spiritual problems as unsolvable, or look to other sources than the pulpit for their solution.

Such is the temper of the age in which we must work. It calls for men who shall be heard, who shall make themselves felt by the largeness of their spiritual manhood and by the divineness of their message. Hence the need of a higher conception of our work, of the place of preaching in the plan of God and in the spiritual training of the race.

The Scripture Warrant for Preaching. — The prophet is the ancestor of the preacher. In the Old Testament there were two agents or leaders of the religious life, the priest and the prophet. The priest sustained the form of religion, the prophet ministered to its spirit. The forms of religion may become superficial, unreal, exclusive. And so God sent the prophets special, occasional voices, to break up the crust of religion and reach its spirit, — fearless speakers for God, giving larger views of His nature and plan, reinterpreting the meaning of law and temple and ritual, the voice of personal and national need. The prophets are the spiritual teachers of the Old Testament. "Where there is no vision," says one of the proverbs, no fresh vision, no new light upon God and his world, "the people perish" or cast off restraint. The very progress of the race depends upon the prophetic voice.

The greatest prophet was a preacher. Christ taught with authority and not as the scribes. "His Kingly and Priestly work was initiated by the prophetic." The Gospel is an incarnation, truth through personality. "In Him is life and the life is the light of men." And the personal method is His way of disseminating truth and life. Not through institutions nor literature, but through personality, must the

Gospel be chiefly spread. "From lip to lip and heart to heart, the truth must be passed on, the divine life in one soul to be as a torch with which to kindle it in another." So Christ gathered disciples and taught them and impressed His personality upon them. He perfected the oral method. He did not leave a single written word. His first parable, the key to His teaching, is on the way the truth is to be given and received. "He opened His mouth and taught them."

Christ chose and trained men and sent them forth to be *preachers*. The illustrations by which their minds were prepared to receive definite instruction imply the preaching of the word, fishermen, sowers of seed, reapers of harvests. The charges and descriptions of their work are still clearer. They were sent as He was. They were to be His servants, His witnesses, His messengers. They were to feed the lambs and feed the flock. Christ's last words were a solemn and emphatic charge to preach the Gospel and make disciples of all nations. "Nothing can be more explicit as a declaration of the chief work which He was committing to His representatives."

The Apostles regarded their *chief work as preaching*. They asked for the appointment of

deacons, that they might give themselves to the "ministry of the Word and prayer." Paul describes his work as declaring, teaching, testifying. "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the Gospel." Peter speaks of himself as "commanded to preach to the people." The Apostles describe themselves as ambassadors, stewards, heralds, preachers. "Wherever in the New Testament the *call* to the ministry is spoken of, preaching is the point made emphatic."

The History of the Church testifies to the Importance of Preaching. — The Christian Church began in preaching. The gift of the spirit at Pentecost was that men might hear, each in his own tongue, the word of the good news. The sermon of Peter stands as the notable event in the morning of the Church. The Gospel was preached before it was written. The man to whose philosophic breadth, and spiritual fervor and consuming zeal, the early Church owes the most, was preëminently a public teacher. The Epistles of Paul were written to the churches that had been gathered by his skilful teaching of the Word.

Each century of the Church has repeated this fact of its early experience.

The first victories over heathenism and semi-civilized peoples have been won by the preacher: Columba and his followers among the early Britons, Augustine among the later Angles and Saxons, Boniface in Gaul, Cyril and Methodius along the Danube and Black Sea, record the triumphs of preaching. And the modern proofs are not less striking: Xavier, Lacroix, and Duff in India, Burns and Morrison in China, Moffat in South Africa, Brainerd and Eliot among the aboriginal tribes of the Western Continent.

The Christian life thus established has been strengthened and enlarged through the work of preaching. Other agencies have been coöperant with the pulpit, the teacher, and the student. The teacher must be companion of the preacher if faith is to be established in intelligence and the Church self-propagating by wise and efficient agencies. Education in religion is rightly receiving greater attention. But it will not, it cannot, take the place of the pulpit. Preaching is in accordance with the very genius of Christianity. Christianity has created the pulpit. The sermons of Christian pulpits are interwoven with the best life of civilization, its educator and inspiration. From the days of Augustine and Chrysostom and

Ambrose to those of Liddon and Spurgeon and Beecher and Brooks, the succession has been almost unbroken of apostolic and prophetic voices. And it may be truthfully said that the modern pulpit has lost nothing of the responsibility for instruction and is not inferior in the gifts of teaching and persuasion.

It is further noticeable that the "times of refreshing," the spiritual and aggressive eras of Christianity, have been the days of great preachers. In this fact no doubt are found both cause and effect. Their lofty visions and burning words have unveiled the heavens and uncovered the hearts of men and made the Kingdom of God a real and present and dominant Kingdom. And such vitality in the hearts of men is impatient of honied words and pretty fancies and formal correctness in the pulpit. It demands and calls forth the creative thoughts and passionate speech that make eras of spiritual progress.

The higher life of society is dependent upon an effective pulpit. Movements of reform have begun in the simple and fearless preaching of the Gospel. Wiclif and his preachers touched the moral sense of a corrupt age and made men restless and aspiring. John Huss caught the spirit and proclaimed the word of a

new life in Bohemia. Glorious has been the succession of fearless preachers, the men of "light and leading," who have increasingly interpreted Christianity as a present Kingdom among men: Colet, Luther, Calvin, Knox, — and especially in more recent times and in our own race and language, Baxter, Bunyan, Wesley, Whitefield; Robertson, Spurgeon, Beecher, Parkhurst, — each in his own way has touched the bones of a dead formalism and made living creatures, or pierced the tissue of lies that worldly habit had woven about the Church that it might come forth in newness of life.

And this brings us to the final argument for preaching — the further reason for the perpetuity of this work in the Church. We have already seen that the pulpit is in accord with the very genius of Christianity, its product as the religion of the Incarnation. Christianity is a life; it can only be propagated by personal influence. Speech is the chief expression and agency of personality. This is the *psychological reason.* The pulpit is in accordance with the very nature of man. Language is the expression of life. We know and receive life largely through speech. Words are the visible

forms of truths. But the highest power, the fullest meaning of words, are perceived and felt only when they are spoken. Words are the living pulses of the soul. "The essays of Emerson were never truly understood," said Alcott, "until he had spoken them." It is the accent of conviction that arrests and holds the inattentive and thoughtless multitude. It is the tone of sympathy that opens indifferent and hostile minds. It is the key of experience "our hands have handled" that interprets the word and truly commends it to the hearts of men. A man must speak the message, a man who knows and feels its power, a man throbbing with its spirit and import. And here preaching, though using all the natural powers and arts of speech, is lifted distinctly above rhetoric and elocution, into a higher plane of spiritual influence. It is the power of personal testimony, the Christ speaking through his messenger: "Ye are my witnesses."

"The source of genuine religious eloquence lies much deeper and higher than in the study and appropriation of rhetorical figures and other artificial human methods, — in the deep glow, in the enthusiasm of the heart for the divine truth and beauty of the Gospel, which the spirit of God produces in the speaker

when he becomes humbly absorbed in the truth; and when this unfolds itself in his address, then also the Spirit of God coöperates, impressing and touching the hearts of the hearers. In this self-abandonment to the holy unction from above lies the inmost source of true religious eloquence and the secret of its fruitful operation."

We need not fear that preaching will pass away. Its function is perpetual in the work of the Church. It will be affected by the conditions of the age and must change its form to meet such conditions. There may be periods of decline in the power of the pulpit, but its mission and necessity are unmistakable and unchangeable. Dr. Robertson Nicol draws the lesson from the recent religious census of London: "The great means of attracting the people is Christian preaching. Wherever a preacher appears, no matter what his denomination is, he has a great audience. Nothing makes up for a failure in preaching. The churches of all denominations, if they are wise, will give themselves with increased zeal and devotion to the training of the Christian ministry. Nor will any magnificence of ritual, or any musical attraction, or any lectures on secular subjects, permanently attract worshippers. It can be done only by Christian preaching."

We may know the importance of our work as we give ourselves to the study and discipline of preaching. Its worth and glory may light the humblest task of sermon-preparation and lift the minute daily discipline into unfailing impulse.

There is no work in the world for a moment comparable with that of preaching the Gospel, standing in Christ's stead, teaching and persuading men to be reconciled to God.

There is no joy so sweet and abiding as the sense of ministry to the higher life of men. "Life has given and withheld much from me that has been or has seemed to be rich and valuable. It has never given me another hour when I felt that I had found the chief privilege of existence, as I felt when I forgot myself and pleaded with heaven for those miserable men; nor has it withheld much that I should have treasured more than the power to continue my happy work among them."[1] There is no fruitage of toil so sure and abundant as using the gifts of nature and grace in the Christian pulpit to make men "doers of the word."

The Church wants better men in her pulpits, not more men; prophets, not priests; the living word, not the professional repetition of truth.

[1] Mrs. Ward, "Chapters from a Life," p. 210.

The noblest gifts, the richest furnishing, the best training, are not too much. But she must have men who shall regard preaching as the highest and most difficult art, who shall have lofty conceptions of it, who shall not be lazy or insincere, who shall bend themselves and hold themselves to its attainment.

There never has been a harder or better time for the preacher: a time that tests men and tries men, hostile to the factitious and the false, indifferent to the common place; a time that can be convinced and led by nothing less than the highest truth of life and doctrine.

It is possible for each of us to grow toward the ideal expressed by Luther: "There is no more precious treasure nor nobler thing upon earth and in this life than a true and faithful parson and preacher. The spiritual preacher increaseth the Kingdom of God, filleth heaven with saints, plundereth hell, guardeth men against death, putteth a stop to sin, instructeth the world, consoleth every man according to his condition, preserveth peace and unity, traineth young people excellently, planteth all kinds of virtue in the nation; in short, he createth a new world, and buildeth a house that shall not pass away."

LECTURE II

THE IDEAL OF PREACHING

OUTLINE

1. The conception of preaching. It cannot be fixed, but must be varied and growing with the person and the age.

2. The preacher is the public speaker, like the lecturer and the orator, subject to the laws of thought and speech, and of the associate mind of the crowd.

3. The preacher is the public speaker on religious truth. Truth discussed in every field of thought.

4. The preacher is the public speaker on Christian truth.
   - *a* Christianity has created the pulpit.
   - *b* The varying phases : the sermons of the Apostles, the homilies of the early Church, the preaching of the Reformation era, the sermon of the modern pulpit.
   - *c* Characteristics of the sermon, that distinguish it from other writing and speaking. (1) The sense of divine message. (2) Instruction in the Scriptures. (3) Persuasion to right living. (4) Direct and personal qualities. (5) Practical, a tool not a work of art. See Gowan, "Preaching and Preachers," chap. 4.
   - *d* Hence the definition of the sermon.

5. The message of the sermon.
   What is scriptural preaching? Preaching Christ, its technical and its spiritual meaning.

6. The aim of the sermon.
   "The perfect life." Hence the varieties of sermons, and the many elements in the sermon. Instruction and persuasion. How to reach the will. The variety of natures and needs in a congregation.

7. The method of the sermon.
   How a sermon differs from an essay and oration.
   The danger and use of eloquence in preaching.
   The oral method of Christ and all true preachers.
   The fullest and freest expression of the person.
   "Preaching is God's word thro' a man."

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L. J. Evans. "Preaching Christ."
Gowan. "Preaching and Preachers." 4.

LECTURE II

THE IDEAL OF PREACHING

We have seen the importance of preaching. It is an unchanging office of the Church, a permanent function of public worship. There may be periods of decline in preaching, times of special difficulty, but preaching remains as the chief work of the ministry, as the divinely appointed means for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ.

What, then, is preaching? What shall be our ideal of the sermon? An ideal we must have, pure and high, if we are not to be ashamed of our work. We must build after the pattern in the Mount. The conception will direct all training and effort. It will give self-knowledge, and awaken unknown powers, and lead to larger attainment.

The ideal of the sermon is not a form that has been fixed by the past, however great and venerable, a mould into which all present life

and truth must be run. Preaching should be free and personal. It should have the variety and individuality of the person to make it a living and life-giving word. When the sermon becomes stereotyped in form, an artificial channel, the providence of God raises up a prophet outside the schools or too great for them — a Wesley, a Moody, a Brooks — to cut new channels for power. The form of the sermon must vary with the age, with the life of the messengers, and the nature and needs of the men to whom they speak.

The preacher is a public speaker like the lecturer and the orator. Like them he must regard the laws of rhetoric and elocution. Like them he must study the workings of the mind and the special conditions of the associate mind of the crowd.

The sermon has sometimes lost its grip upon men by its aloofness of thought, its ignorance of what was really going on in the hearts of men, and its unreality of style, not using the best speech of daily life. It would be far better for the preacher to study such masters of the plain people and of common speech as John Bright and Abraham Lincoln than any great sermon-form of the past.

The preacher is the public speaker on religion, discussing the truths of the spiritual life. The relation of man to God, the moral order and government of God, and the practical ethics that grow out of it, are felt to be vital to the welfare of man and society and are examined and discussed by every generation. No other questions so hold the thought of men and are considered with such unabated interest. They crop out in other fields than theology and are discussed in other places than the pulpit. The essay, the lecture, the book of the day, — even the current fiction, — are full of questions of religion. The preacher speaks of truths that are voiced by many others.

The preacher speaks of *Christian truth*, the facts and truths and duties connected with a distinct and peculiar historic revelation. While the preacher in many respects is like any man speaking in a public and formal way to others anywhere in the world, he is again very distinct from other speakers in his message and aim and method.

The sermon must be compared with other forms of thought and speech that its humanness and reality may not be lost ; but its distinction must also be emphasized that its inspiration

may not be lost, that a true conception may gird and impel the minds of the ministry. Christianity has created the Christian pulpit. Its central truth of the Incarnation demands the personal expression for the propagation of its life. Its truths have been recorded in a Book, to guide and inspire this personal expression. The life of Christianity finds its outcome and its goal in a Kingdom of God, the Christian life in all its relations, a Christian society, the fellowship of loyal lives. The spontaneous, instinctive expression of Christian hearts, the means likewise of the continuance and growth of faith and fellowship, is the worship of the Church. But the speaking of the Word of God is the highest element of worship. The Holy Spirit is promised with the unfolding of the truth. All that makes God and His will and grace in Christ better known is the highest help to a spiritual worship. Luther may exaggerate in holding that there can be no true worship where there is no true preaching, but preaching and worship cannot be safely divorced. When worship is unduly exalted, the temptations are formalism, insincerity, exclusiveness; when the stress is unduly put upon the preaching, the temptations are intellectualism, dogmatism, and often the separation of faith

and life. So the preacher speaks Christian truth as the divinely appointed way for its extension and as a part of the worship of the Church.

The sermons of the Apostles were arguments or interpretations from the Old Testament and their personal witness to the fact of Christ.

The sermons of the Early Fathers were largely homilies, the discussion of the practical questions of life in the light of the Christian revelation with personal exhortations.

Preaching, as a regular order, was lost through the development of the hierarchy of the Church and its splendid ritual through the Middle Ages. The Reformation renewed the practice of preaching and introduced the use of a single verse or verses as a text. The removal of the source of authority in religion from the Church to the Bible gave a new hunger for the Word and sent the public teacher to the Bible for his truth and authority. The study of the Bible led to the endless discussions as to its meaning and sometimes the exalting of individual opinion over the opinion of the Church. Religion grew speculative and dogmatic, and the preaching reflected the life of the time. The Puritan sermons are treatises on theology, full of minute divisions and subtle and artificial distinc-

tions. The texts are often but starting points for the discussion of some great topic of theology.

The sermons of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century partook of the oratory of the day. The classic influences in the development of English prose led to a fulness and finish of form. The sermon was a religious oration, with its formal introduction and regular divisions and eloquent peroration. To the restless and practical spirit of to-day the sermons of the past century seem stilted and artificial, but they were true to the tastes of public speech.

Our age has no definite form of the sermon, as it has no definite conception of public speech. The age of the telephone is impatient of the sounding phrase. The scientific spirit is suspicious of the name of eloquence. There is more individuality in preaching and less imitation of definite and commanding masters. And the desire to see things as they are and to present them in a way to win the attention of an absorbed or indifferent generation has led to the two marked tendencies in present-day preaching, viz.: the realistic interpretation of Scripture and the realistic portrayal of life.

So preaching, like any other human force, has been affected by its environment, feeling the

thought and style of the age and wisely adapting itself to the varying tastes of men. It has followed the development of the race and language. The preaching to-day cannot be the preaching of the Apostles, though it deals with the same elemental forces and is inspired by the same spirit of truth. It is the product of the Christian Church and of Christian civilization, and is best understood by those who know the most of the life from which it comes.

In this long process of the Christian pulpit, from the complex life to-day of which preaching is the expression, is it possible to state *certain definite characteristics* of the sermon, to draw in a few strokes the conception of preaching?

Preaching in the first place is characterized by a sense of message from God. "We stand up before men, not to enforce our own opinions, our own likes and dislikes, but to teach them the will of God, and the conditions of salvation. All these things are to be found in the Bible. It is God's gift to man. The instructions and conditions are not ours, but God's. We are merely ambassadors, and it is our duty and privilege to enforce the conditions and to beseech our fellow-men to embrace them, and to become reconciled to God." [1]

[1] Gowan, p. 206.

A true sermon is *scriptural*. I do not mean that it must be full of Scripture, but it must give the message of Christ and in His spirit. A sermon may be full of Scripture and yet convey no message. It may be wholly in the language of to-day and give the very heart of the Gospel.

"Raise me but a *barn* in the very shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral, and give me a man who shall preach Christ crucified, with something of the energy which the all-inspiring theme is calculated to awaken, and you shall see the former crowded with warm hearts, while the matins and vespers of the latter, if the Gospel be not preached there, shall be chanted to the statues of the mighty dead." [1]

A sermon is *instructive*. It must teach the truths of Christianity in a way to inform the mind, in a way to give new and clearer views of the facts and truths of the Gospel if it is to be true to its mission. It is not a pleasing panorama nor a fervent exhortation. The pulpit fails that does not broadly and soundly educate the people in the Scriptures. The Presbyterian pulpit of Scotland has kept its mastery by its superior instruction.

A sermon is *persuasive*. A sermon tries to

[1] James, "An Earnest Ministry."

do something more than instruct or please, it aims to affect the will and so control the life. "The conviction of the judgment will, not necessarily, lead a man to act." We must provide motives that shall induce the person to choose the right way of life. The will is the citadel of personality, and to reach the will, so to display and commend truth, that the man shall of himself accept and follow it, is the aim and secret of effective preaching. And as we are complex beings with many different approaches to the will, the study of life must constantly go on, that we may know how to persuade men. It matters not how it is done, if it is done; whether the motive for action comes through judgment or conscience or emotion, if the will sends its choice through all the veins of life. But we must remember that the sermon comes short of its mission if it does not persuade. Persuasion was the note of Mr. Beecher's preaching. "To preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ; to have Christ so melted and dissolved in you, that when you preach your own self you preach Him as Paul did; to have every part of you living and luminous with Christ; and then to make use of everything that is in you, your analogical reasoning, your logical reasoning, your imagination, your mirth-

fulness, your humor, your indignation, your wrath; to take everything that is in you all steeped in Jesus Christ, and to throw yourself with all your power upon a congregation — that has been my theory of preaching the Gospel. I have felt that man should consecrate every gift that he has got in him that has any relation to the persuasion of men and to the melting of men — that he should put them all on the altar, kindle them all, and let them burn for Christ's sake." This theory of preaching makes the sermon distinct from every other kind of public speech.

The sermon should be *direct* and *personal*. It should aim at something and hit it. Without rudeness, with the sensitive and kindly spirit of a Christian gentleman, the message should be given in a way that men shall not escape it, but apply it to their own lives. Peter at Pentecost and Paul before Felix are good examples for us. It will require a heart of love and courage, the spirit of a true prophet to do this. It means the sympathetic knowledge of men, appropriateness, the fitting of the word to personal need, above all sincerity, true in one's own life and with a disinterested zeal, never presuming to say under the protection of the pulpit what you would not say to

men in the privacy and intimacy of their own homes.

Preaching is a direct message to the hearts of men, a word from life to life. "These, my friends," Charles Kingsley would sometimes say, "are real thoughts. And I am here to speak about what is actually taking place in your hearts and mine." And his wife said that when he was most earnest and moving, it was when he was meeting some case of individual need in his parish, some sorrow or sin which perhaps he alone knew.

The sermon should be our word. "If I have not seen Him myself, I cannot preach Him," said Joseph Parker. And the word should find its way as directly to the understanding and motives of our hearers as will make it the most effective. Nothing of thought, style, or manner should interfere with the direct and personal quality.

And once more the sermon should be *practical.* Preaching is the highest art, but the artistic conception of the sermon is fatal. The sermon is not a work of art. Phillips Brooks says that Phidias among a savage people might still go on carving his Minervas, but not so the preacher. He is bound to minister in lowliness of spirit, to make taste serve the needs of men.

The sermon is not to be something but to do something. It is simply a tool, and when it becomes an idol, it is high time for the image breaker to come. The story is told of Da Vinci that when he had finished the painting of the Last Supper, he asked a friend to come and see it. As the painter withdrew the cloth, the friend exclaimed, "How wonderful the cup in the hand of Christ!" Da Vinci impulsively drew his brush across the cup, passionately saying, "Nothing shall hide the face of the Christ!" We should deal with the sermon in this spirit. The sermon is the best which does the best work. We get in the way of admiring the sermon for itself. We form certain laws, we have certain examples, and we try to make the sermon conform to them. And we are tempted to judge preaching by this ideal. But laws, ideals, are only for use. They must always be kept servants. And the man and the message and the souls of his hearers, these must be kept supreme. Some form unknown to the schools may reach men where the most approved model may fail. We are not to despise or neglect our training and our ideals, but shape them into divinest use.

> "It were to be wished the flaws were fewer
> In the earthen vessel holding treasure, —

Which lies as safe as in a golden ewer, —
But the main thing is — does it hold good measure —
Heaven soon sets right all other matter."

With these characteristics of the sermon in our mind, it may be well to try to define the sermon. We may preach without ever defining preaching, but the definition will help to make clear the ideal. And I know of no better definition than that of Austin Phelps, "The sermon is an oral address to the popular mind, on religious truth contained in the Scriptures, and elaborately treated with a view to persuasion."[1] Leave out the word "elaborately," which suggests too much the sermon of the schools, somewhat formal and literary, and you have an excellent definition of the sermon.

The message of the sermon is from the Scriptures. The Bible is the library of religion, the authoritative source of the Christian religion. True conceptions of God, of man, of the soul-life, of personal and social relations and duties, of the "Kingdom of God," are to be gained here as from nowhere else. The preacher is to be the teacher of the spiritual life, and that means that he is to be the student of the Scriptures and whatever will interpret their mean-

[1] "Theory of Preaching," p. 28.

ing. He is to be a religious expert, and that means that first and last he is to be an expert student of the Bible. The authority of the preacher is in his message, and in the popular conviction that he knows by study and experience whereof he speaks. The thoroughness and reality of scriptural knowledge is back of all lasting power. Encourage the impression that the preacher is only a talker, that he is discussing Christianity as men talk of the market and the forum, and men do not care to hear him, nor will they accept his word as of an especial divineness. "Be of good courage. If a man has anything to say from God to the people, they will come to hear him, and their hearts will be touched. What he has to say on his own account, they will not care for very long, unless he is a man of a million; and even then their interest in his preaching is comparatively languid."[1]

With a knowledge of the age and sympathy with its life and problems there must be a living above it, a solitary dwelling with the revelation of Christ, if men are to heed our message. The pulpit cannot be an authority in education or economics or civics, but it can be an authority in the things of Christ. And

[1] "Life of R. W. Dale," p. 527.

men hunger for the truth of Christ — for that which heals and cleanses and gives strength and hope. When a man gets his message from the street, or from some current book in the place of the Bible, when he fails to preach Christ, he is giving the people a stone when they ask for bread.

"Whenever a minister forgets the splendid message of pardon, peace and power based on faith in Jesus Christ as God manifest in the flesh, whenever for this message he substitutes literary lectures, critical essays, sociological disquisitions, theological controversies, or even ethical interpretations of the universal conscience, whenever, in other words, he ceases to be a Christian preacher and becomes a lyceum or seminary lecturer, he divests himself of that which in all ages of the world has been the power of the Christian ministry, and will be its power so long as men have sins to be forgiven, temptations to conquer, and sorrows to be assuaged." [1]

But do not let us be narrow and pietistic in our interpretation of the message. If we are, we shall fail to be scriptural. "Give us the simple Gospel," "Preach Christ," are sometimes used as cant phrases by the pew to keep the

[1] Lyman Abbott, "The Christian Ministry," p. 34.

pulpit from interfering with immoral gains and immoral pleasures; by the preacher to emphasize some partial and sectarian test of orthodoxy. John Wesley protested against what were "vulgarly called Gospel sermons." He says with all the satire of a Sydney Smith, "Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal that has neither sense nor grace bawl out something about Christ and His blood, or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, What a fine Gospel sermon."[1] A recent English book, "Chapters on Preaching," wisely says: "The common phrases, 'preaching the Gospel' and 'preaching Christ,' have a very large meaning; much larger than many who use them think. The phrase, 'the simple Gospel,' may be used in a very superficial and misleading manner. The Gospel is indeed simple in its great outlines, and plain men can grasp its main points; but it is broad and deep as well as clear. The preacher has not only to declare the fundamental facts of the Gospel history, but to show also the application of the great principles and laws of the Kingdom of Christ to the complex affairs of human life through the changing ages. He has to show how the authority of Christ bears upon the individual will and life and also

[1] "Studies in the English Church," p. 15.

upon all social questions. This great message is the instrument which God has appointed for the regeneration and uplifting of individual men and women, and of human society" (p. 37).

It is a wonderful thing to preach Christ. I am sure we shall never reach the full measure of the thought. Even the aged apostle felt his partial knowledge, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part." The Scriptures testify of Him: preparation, anticipation, partial lights, biography, the unfolding and application of his life and doctrine. History is but the pathway of His plan. Literature is full of broken lights of Him. All thought, endeavor, progress, speaks of Him who gives it life, color, and purpose. Nature is His. Her manifold messages are voices of the Christ, and her forces are His servants. "Christ, who liveth and was dead, and who is alive for evermore and holds the keys of death and the grave." The man who has this conception cannot but preach a living message. He speaks of one who is the focal life of history, the completed word of revelation. To preach the Gospel is to preach Christ in all His relations to the Bible, to the world, and to humanity. Such a spirit sees Him everywhere and labors and waits for the perfect revelation.

The Aim of the Sermon is the Salvation of Men. — But we must interpret salvation in its largest sense. Salvation is not simply deliverance, but growth. It is not an official act, but a lifelong process; it means the enrichment and ennoblement of life; it is God's way of making a man — to use the thought emphasized by the teachings of Henry Drummond. With the aim so large as the development of spiritual manhood, the whole range of spiritual truth may be used, and the method employed may be as manifold and various as the nature of man.

The simple first lessons of repentance and faith, the deeper lessons of Christ's nature and the fruit of the Spirit, the adaptation of the Gospel to the puzzling questions of a complex age — all are included in the aim of the sermon. Like a master the preacher must try to play upon all the keys of the human heart, to show the Christ in his many-sidedness, to multiply the brightness of truth, to present the Gospel so that it shall seem God's answer to the need of our humanity. No narrow and technical idea of the sermon will ever do this. It must not be made upon any single model or after any special school of thought. We cannot judge the value of the sermon by any statistics of conversion. To elevate the thoughts of men is

as important as to change their direction. A Brooks and a Moody may be equally God's workmen.

While we are to consider the richness of truth, the variety of natures and needs of men, and consequently the varied method the sermon may pursue, we are to be single-minded in preaching. Keep the *spiritual aim supreme*, and present the Gospel so that men shall be convinced of sin and led to repentance and faith. I have no doubt that preaching would gain in power if it were more often strictly evangelistic. We must never forget that "we stand in Christ's stead, persuading men to be reconciled to God."

And once more, we have in the definition of the sermon *its method*. It is a man speaking to men. It is not rapt monologue, nor profound discussion, nor literary grace, nor impassioned eloquence — it is simply a man speaking what he himself has found of spiritual truth to other men, in a way to interest and instruct and persuade. It implies the oral method. Christ perfected the oral method, and the sermon is bound to follow it. The method of teaching inheres in the method of revelation. It is not the book, or essay, or lecture, or oration. It is

speaking simply and directly to men. The preacher has two things to do, — listen and speak, — make his nature open to God and vocal to men. Nothing should interfere with the expression of his whole truth and his whole personality, to use the strong figure of Mr. Beecher, "throw himself upon men." If you can speak the best by writing, then writing should be your way; if the manuscript stands between you and your audience, then the manuscript should be thrown aside. Preaching is speaking and nothing else. A stilted idea of the sermon often hinders true preaching. The young preacher wishes to make his sermon like a finished essay, full of suggestion and beauty; or a strong treatise like a chapter from some meaty book; or an eloquent oration that has been born of some special event. And because he strives after one of these ideals and cannot reach it, lacks the power of thought and the charm of style, he wearies of the sermon and the people are not fed. Hold to the sermon as a Gospel message — a word spoken to men.

"That a man who lives with God, whose delight is to study God's words in the Bible, in the world, in history, in human nature; who is thinking about Christ and man and salvation every day, that he should not be able to talk

about these things of his heart, seriously, lovingly, thoughtfully, simply, for two half-hours every week, is inconceivable, and I do not believe it. Cast off the haunting incubus of the notion of great sermons. Care not for your sermon, but for your truth and your people; and subjects will spring up on every side of you, and the chances to preach upon them will be all too few."[1] And let us not confound eloquence with preaching. There is a false idea that he who speaks well must preach well; that fluent speech and striking figures and magnetic manner are the elements of preaching. They may be used, — we must train and use the gifts of person and speech, — but preaching is more. We might well keep in mind the words of Dr. Horton of London: "Eloquence is a gift which the Lord does not often use much for His purposes — it is a prancing palfrey which the Son of man rarely rides. Moses was not eloquent, Aaron was. The words of the Lord came constantly to Moses. Aaron had gifts of speech, but he made a golden calf. Jeremiah was not eloquent — his opponents apparently were. Jeremiah stands on the summit of prophetic work, and the wordy men who gained the popular ear in his day are pilloried in the history of

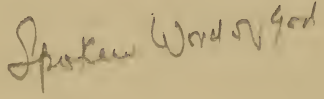
[1] Brooks, "Lectures on Preaching."

the Kingdom of God as deceivers. Paul was not eloquent, so he tells us, Apollos was, and mighty in the Scriptures, too. Yet we gather that Paul with his poor presence, his involved periods, his arguments like the fiery grinding of a wheel on granite, received and delivered more of the word of the Lord than Apollos. It would be dangerous to take illustrations nearer at hand. And it is enough simply to say that natural eloquence may easily be a snare to a preacher. Words may come so abundantly that he will not wait to hear the word of the Lord. To obtain the copious flow of ideas and images and feelings may be so easy to him that he will not take the trouble to traverse the barren wastes which lie between him and the Mount of God, or to climb the dizzy path to the gloomy cavern where the still small voice is heard. If, of course, he does not shrink from the toilsome conditions and does actually receive the word of God, his eloquence may stand him in good stead. Eloquence is useful if the Word is there, but it must not be mistaken for the Word." [1]

The sum of the matter is that preaching, however it is done, is the giving of a word of God to men. The preacher must receive the

[1] "Verbum Dei," p. 175.

Word himself and give his life to it. And in giving the Word to others, he must give his life with it. His word must be given so that the truth shall be revealed and honored, so that men shall feel that they are receiving the very Word itself and not mere opinions concerning it. The person will be lost in the message. And if the man possess the truth and is possessed by it, in this way the whole man will speak. "Preaching is God's Word through a man."



LECTURE III

THE PREPARATION FOR PREACHING

OUTLINE

1. The two methods of preparation, the mechanical and the vital, the making of a sermon and the enrichment of life.
2. The study of the Bible.
   - *a* The general study; the message of the books; the history of revelation; the central, catholic truths, not an ism but Christianity.
   - *b* The need of the study in the original languages. The call for interpreters, prophets, personal and spiritual.
   - *c* The emphasis on Bible study from the tendencies of organization and criticism. The authority of the preacher as an expert in religion.
   - *d* The relation of theological studies to Homiletics.
3. The study of preaching.
   - *a* The reading of sermons and the hearing of the best preachers. To find the methods of others, to form true ideals, to get suggestion and inspiration. The best recent sermons. Examples.
   - *b* The study of Homiletics, the theory of preaching. Not an exact science, at best suggestive.
   - *c* The use of note-books. To train the homiletic habit, the power to see truth for use, to help the memory, and gather seed-thoughts for sermon-growths.
   - *d* Practice in preaching.
4. General study. The preacher should be a man of intelligence and culture.
   - *a* General study preserves the balance and strength of mind.
   - *b* It helps the interpretation of the Bible. The book of man, to be interpreted in the growing life of the world.
   - *c* It helps personal influence, gives sympathy with men and knowledge of the age.
   - *d* It furnishes material for the sermon, truth in life. The great teachers the masters of the higher thought of the language.
   - *e* Examples: Philosophy, History, Biography, Science, Literature.
5. The study of men. Truth is for life. We must know men, if we are to know truth and help men. Wide interests and sympathies. Love of the individual and knowledge of society.
6. The spiritual life. Personal appropriation of truth. A good life the strongest force in preaching.

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LECTURE III

THE PREPARATION FOR PREACHING

Every student for the ministry asks with some degree of earnestness and no little anxiety, How can I become a worthy preacher of the Gospel? The pressure of Christ's separating touch is upon me and I would shrink from no labor "in His name." The demand and the difficulty are great and I would meet them. I would be something more than a conventional teacher. I would bring forth the utmost increase of the talent God has given me. I would become the best preacher possible with my natural gifts and God's grace. Now how can I train myself for this noble end? What am I to be and to do? What are the essential elements in my preparation for preaching? I trust the conception of the sermon has been made so clear and high that the first feeling is one of lack, if not of discouragement. The first thing in the preparation for effective preaching is to be sure of the message, to have

the right quantity and quality of material. The preacher must have something to say. He must not be a Gratiano who "speaks an infinite deal of nothing." His reasons must not be like "two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff."

There are two very different methods of preparing for preaching. One is the special or cramming process, going to work after getting the text or subject to gather sufficient materials from different sources, — the Bible, commentaries, sermons, homiletic handbooks, — to make the article of the required length. I use the right word, "make," for such a sermon is bound to be a manufacture put together from the time, and not in the nobler sense a message, coming out of the very life of the soul.

The other method is one of systematic and general culture, making one's self increasingly familiar with the great subjects that belong to religion and its expression, and then the particular sermon will be the special selection and expression of the thoughts and convictions already yours. It will be a word of *life*. I need hardly say which is the more real preaching. A man's speech is the resultant and index of his culture. The processes of the years

come to maturity in the fruit of his lips. And the sermon is the expression of the man's spiritual and more moral culture. "How long did it take you to prepare the sermon of the morning?" said a friend to Henry Ward Beecher. "Forty years," was the striking and truthful answer. Long courses of study, thought; the deepest experiences and arduous practice had their part in the inspiring utterance of thought and feeling. I would suggest the lines of immediate and lifelong preparation.

The Study of the Bible. —The Bible is to be your present and lifelong study. Your message must come from your personal and thorough knowledge of the Scriptures if it is to be a word of God to men. The preaching of the Christian pulpit is to be scriptural; its distinct and simple mission the teaching of the word of God. Every problem that has disturbed the minds of men in the past and every problem that now confronts society can be stated and answered in terms of the Scriptures. The body of the sermon, then, must come from the Scriptures: its subject, authority, proof, and inspiration.

Preaching can never be truly exalted at the

expense of scholarship. Exegesis and Homiletics have a vital relation. Other things being equal, the man who is the best student of the Bible will become the best preacher. Dare to be ignorant of many books, that you may know the *one Book*. Mr. G. Campbell Morgan has recently given some suggestive hints as to Bible study. Sometimes read continuously a book at a sitting, as we do any other book. Write out your own impression, make your own analysis of the meaning and message of the book. Then correct and enlarge your interpretation by the study of some of the best recent helps. In this way you will get an idea of the history of Revelation, catch the purpose and spirit of the whole. And this broader outlook will correct a narrow and artificial use of Scripture, sometimes resulting from a microscopic study of single words and phrases. We must not lose the prophetic vision of the way in absorbed study of any single object.

In this way, also, we shall get the central catholic truth of Scripture and not be possessed by some peculiar phase or ism of Christianity. The weakness of the pulpit is in the confusion of tongues, each claiming to be the voice of God. Where is the authority of preaching when preachers differ so widely as to

what is truth? Truth, indeed, is many-sided, and no man or society of men can look at once upon all its facts. But there are vital truths of Revelation about which there can be no mistake in a rational exegesis, and these we are to get and proclaim. The authority of the sermon will be in its catholic truth, and not in an emphasis which distinguishes some special body of believers.

And there is need for this study in the *Scripture languages*. No doubt every good translation gives the substance, the vital truth, of revelation ; and a man who has no knowledge of Greek and Hebrew can still be a respectable Bible student and a helpful Bible preacher. But he cannot be the best, and that is what we are always aiming at. In any calling, a man to have authority must touch the *sources*. And it is especially true of religion that asks so much of men, and in its authors is connected inseparably with the person. As language is the chief expression of the person, it would seem important to know the language in which the person gave his truth. It is not the place to enter into minute argument for the study of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. Enough here to say that such study puts one into the atmosphere of the sacred writers and so helps to their

true interpretation; it leads to patient thoroughness, to the mental humility essential to a spiritual learner; it gives a fresh, suggestive, personal message; it corrects a partial and eccentric view of the Gospel by the consensus of the best scholars; it is the true conserver of liberty and orthodoxy: and the worthy scholars are practically all students of the original languages, so that even their work cannot be fully understood without something of this knowledge.

Though you may never become independent students of Hebrew and Greek, the study is invaluable if it help you to understand the work of others and give you the humility and patience of the true learner. "Not know Hebrew?" said Lord Tennyson in surprise to Mr. Jowett, the Master of Balliol, to whom he had gone for some knotty question of Job. "You a teacher of religion and not know your sacred books?" The pulpit always needs — chiefly needs to-day — spiritual interpreters, the personal, independent, reverent interpretation of the Scriptures.

The need of Bible study for the preacher gets special emphasis from the tendencies of *organization* and *criticism*. The tendency of the modern church is more and more toward a highly organized body of workers, and the time

and strength of the pastor must be given to the planning and direction of this work. This will certainly cripple the preacher in so far as it is a temptation to neglect his study and the thoughtful preparation of the sermon. The temptation will be too great for men unless they have the fixed habits of Bible study. Bible study alone can save us from the weakness of a superficial and sensational pulpit.

And *criticism* has weakened the accent of authority; it has put too many men on the defensive and given to others the feeling of uncertainty; the pulpit has lacked the positive spirit of humble certitude. The negative effects of criticism are no doubt passing, and the constructive results are taking its place. But the composition of the Scriptures, the theory of inspiration, the forms of doctrine, will always be exposed to change, from science, criticism, archæology, and comparative religion. The preacher alone who is a systematic student of the Bible can use the light from all these sources and find the spiritual realities of the Gospel made all the clearer. It was the late Dr. Behrends, who as a busy pastor had worked his way twice through the Hebrew Scriptures, who could say, "You need not, you should not, make the pulpit the arena of

debate upon questions in dispute ; you need not, you should not, pose as the advocate of this or that theory of inspiration, of this or that school of critical inquiry ; but you can and you ought to use your Bible as the record of the Revelation of God to men, and give men plainly to understand that this is the vital marrow of Scripture, a living fact whose presence and power cannot be ignored, and which is wholly independent of either the lower or higher criticism." [1]

We have considered the relation of the study of the Bible to preaching. We should go a step farther and ask the relation of theological studies to preaching. All studies of the seminary course have their direct and vital relation to preaching : The Greek and the Hebrew, that we may have in the sermon the honest, accurate, fresh message of God ; Theology, that we may understand the relation of one truth to another, and so present the Gospel in its true proportion ; History, that we may have the perspective of truth and make men realize the continuity of faith ; Social ethics, that we may understand the practical problems of our generation and the relation of Christianity to them. So every study of the seminary has practical

[1] "Philosophy of Preaching," p. 128.

bearing upon the work of Homiletics. Here it is focussed; here it finds practical voice. "Homiletics teaches the minister to apply and render fruitful in the service of the Church of God the knowledge which he has already acquired in the theoretic domain."

The Study of Homiletics or the Special Preparation for Preaching. — Most men have been led to preach by reading or hearing some inspiring preacher. A young artist stood before a masterpiece and expressed his admiration and his aspiration, too, in the words, "I too am a painter." The awakening in us of the prophetic spirit we owe to the prophets. And it is good frequently to hear the best men of our time, the men who are spiritual, unselfish men, who understand the age, who have a vital message and who are blessed of God in their work. We should listen in no idle spirit of curiosity and pleasure but with a serious mind, to be fed by the truth, to be inspired by the man, to analyze his work, to know its truth and method, the secret of its power, and to ask how we may be helped by it. Hundreds of ministers weekly listened to Dr. Joseph Parker's Thursday sermon, and they are doing the same for his successor, Mr. R. J. Campbell. Hero-

worship is the only wholesome idolatry. The great impulses of life are personal. We awake to self-knowledge in the light of great examples; our spirits are chastened in their presence and the best of us comes to life. We need not be afraid of imitation. Every poet has tuned his voice at some other lyre. We shall work through following to the freedom of our own kingdom.

The *reading of sermons* is not so good as the hearing of the preacher, but it is the best that many men have. Something is lost in the printed page that makes the highest excellence of preaching. Phillips Brooks says that sermons that are good to hear are not good to read, but his own sermons are the disproof of his statement. The life does not evaporate with the printer's ink. Only a few sermons are literature, but we have a noble body of English sermons for our study of the truth, method, and spirit of preaching. Some men have an ill-founded prejudice against the reading of sermons, as though it would impair their own originality. An honest man need have no fear. Suggestion we want, not plagiarism. It is a true scientific method of forming a standard of work. It is the careful study of individuals and from the many particulars

reaching some universal principles of work. We know what others have done. We find some things that have made them successful. We form worthy ideals of the sermon. And we get inspiration and suggestion for ourselves.

Read sermons not simply for spiritual food, but to cultivate what is well called the "homiletic habit"; that is, the power to see and use truth for public speech. So you will read sermons not only with a "wise passiveness," but with a definite purpose of study, to form estimates and train the powers of pulpit speech. Study the theme as related to the text. Make an outline plan. Notice the nature of the illustrations, trace the development of the argument, the unity and movement of the whole. And I would say in this connection, daily read the Scriptures and practise interpretation with some practical use in view. The purpose to use truth for other lives will help to interpret truth and give the growing power to use the simple, personal message.

Read the *best recent* sermons. It is not so profitable to be familiar with the preaching of the past, however great. Spurgeon's devotion to the great Puritan preachers is not to be commended if it means the ignorance of worthy contemporaries. Flavel and South, Jeremy

Taylor and Robert Hall, spoke a message for their own generation. But each age has its peculiar difficulties and problems and often receives "more light from God's word." And so the best preachers for us to study are those who speak in the language of the present.

Do not confine your study to the preachers of any one Church. In all churches are men through whom God speaks.

Robertson has something of Shakspere's power of uncovering the hidden springs of action, revealing man to himself. And with this power of self-revelation he joins the teaching of the Gospel with suggestiveness and spiritual application.

Kingsley shows the breadth and manifold interests of the Kingdom of God and makes preaching a present message.

Spurgeon gives the evangelical doctrines of the Gospel with the strength of homely idiom and telling symbol and great heart.

Canon Liddon brings the riches of exegesis and theology and philosophy to the pulpit, and gives to the sermon the distinction of his refined and spiritual personality.

Alexander Maclaren is always the expositor, using Scripture as proof and illustration, and never unmindful of the duty and art of persuasion.

Horace Bushnell is the spiritual interpreter, ever seeking beneath the form of fact and doctrine for the divine life, and with much of Robertson's power of insight and expression, though without his passion.

Henry Ward Beecher gives the truth the vividness of imagination and passion and glorifies the ethics of the Gospel.

Phillips Brooks's sermons are great with the singleness of a great mind and heart. Philosophic breadth, spiritual insight into the truth and man, and unwearied enthusiasm for humanity make him a prophet of the generation.

It is not necessary to mention other modern preachers. While the group of creative minds, as in literature, has passed, the number of thoughtful, helpful men is legion. And what I earnestly wish is that you may be careful students of some of the best modern preachers. Do not make the commonplace your ideal. While you aim at the appreciative knowledge of the age, take some one or two men, who in a peculiar way speak to you, and make them your companions — your masters rather. Think their thoughts, speak their language, receive the impress of their personality. In this way you will learn to be preachers.

Next to the study of preachers, the concep-

tion of preaching is to be gained by the mastery of the *theory of preaching*. The theory of preaching is the orderly statement of the laws that have been used in the formation of sermons. It is the attempt to understand, as far as method goes, the secret of the sermons that have been blessed to men. It is reported that a well-known teacher of Homiletics said to his class: "If you will follow the laws of these lectures, you can all become preachers." I do not assent to any such mechanical idea of the pulpit. No study of Homiletics can make preachers; but it can tell us what the experience of the pulpit has found helpful; things to be avoided and others to be done, and so holds before us a certain standard or conception of our work. Homiletics is not an exact science. It is at best suggestive. You will do well to master the suggestions or principles of Homiletics, so that they shall become a working theory, and then forget them in the free expression of your truth in the best way possible.

The Note-Book.— I now mention a method of preparation which may seem trivial at first sight to some minds. But its use by writers and thinkers whom we are bound to respect lifts it out of the mechanical and trivial.

Have a note-book into which you shall gather

texts of Scripture that have been used by others or give promise of use, outlines of sermons, hints at the meaning of texts, truths and illustrations suggested from any source. You may find such a book a storehouse from which you may draw at need, far better than any hand-book because honestly your own; but chiefly such a book will be helpful in forming the habit of seeing and gathering. Mr. Spurgeon has this striking reference to his own practice: "Whenever I have been permitted sufficient respite from my ministerial duties to enjoy a lengthened tour, or even a short excursion, I have been in the habit of carrying with me a small note-book, in which I have jotted down any illustrations which have occurred to me by the way. My recreations have been all the more pleasant because I have made them subservient to my life-work. The note-book has been useful in my travels as a mental purse. If not fixed upon paper, ideas are apt to vanish with the occasion which suggested them. A word or two will suffice to bring an incident or train of thought to remembrance; and therefore, it would be inexcusable in a minister, who needs so much, not to preserve all that comes in his way."

A fuller use of a note-book in reading is

suggested by Dr. R. W. Dale of Birmingham, and the word takes importance from the independent and original mind of the speaker: "To retain the results of your reading, most of you, I think, will find it necessary to read with pen in hand and with a few sheets of paper on your desk. A brief analysis of the principal lines of thought in a great book, and occasional extracts containing the most formal definitions of the author's theory, and his characteristic technicalities, will enable you to recall the whole substance of volumes, which might otherwise fade from your memory; unless, indeed, your memory is far less treacherous than my own. In preparing, two or three years ago, a series of lectures on the Atonement, I was able to save myself a large amount of labor, by using notes of this kind which I had written sixteen or seventeen years before. If, as you read, you discuss in your notes the author's arguments, and criticise his theories, you will obtain at the time a more complete mastery of your position, and your notes will be more useful to you afterward."[1]

Mr. Beecher is not often thought of as a systematic student. He was a genius, and such creative powers often disregard the methods of

[1] "Yale Lectures."

common men. But his note-books speak of the most painstaking method. He made a close and detailed study of the Bible. "The Gospels he read and reread with the greatest care, using all possible helps; making notes of the results of his meditations; and sometimes giving all his strength to a careful analysis of the points of the history or discourse." Mr. Pond, who travelled thousands of miles with him in his lecture-tours, says that "Bible reading and study was a part of his daily work while on the train." His note-books were found to contain "subjects, heads of sermons jotted down at moments of inspiration — in the family circle, on the railroad, in the street car, after a talk with some friend . . . : these were the acorn-thoughts out of which grew up in time strong, wide-spreading oak-tree sermons."

Phillips Brooks was always thinking of his work, always preparing for preaching. Probably the most striking revelation of his biography is his use of note-books. He seems to have read pen in hand, and vital thought did not fail of its permanent personal record. Especially in his theological preparation, when that eager mind was finding itself and expanding by feeding upon world-literature, did he fill book after book with his analyses and

meditations. It is most interesting to compare his sermons with the notes of his study and reading. The germinal idea is in his note-book, and then the growth by long thought and experience into the full message of the sermon.

These great men are testimony enough to the value of some method for preserving the results of study. The time taken is well spent though you may read fewer books. It will train the spiritual vision, the power of interpretation, the habit of meditation, and gather stores so that you may never suffer from the dearth of helpful thought.

Then we learn to preach *by preaching*. We clarify and possess our own thought, we gain the mastery of our powers of speech, we learn how to approach men, and how to instruct and influence audiences of men, by constant practice. The apprenticeship of the preacher is long. In fact the art is long; we shall never succeed in doing the work as we ought.

But when shall this practice of preaching begin? The churches that exalt the office and training of the ministry are inclined to postpone preaching until near the close of the theological training. The Presbyterian Schools of Scotland are devoted to learning and have

little practical training in preaching. The practice of our own Seminaries has been modified by the necessity and freedom of American life, but they have practically the same ideal. Bishop Brooks uses his genial wit on the men who exercise the feeble light of the coming ministry. The freer churches in Great Britain and America teach their young men to preach as a dog is taught to swim, "by throwing him into the water." Mr. Spurgeon was a boy preacher. Alexander Maclaren, Dr. Joseph Parker, Dr. Dale, and his successor Mr. Jowett, all began to preach before they had systematic theological training. No doubt the mean between these extremes is the best for most young men. The power of the preacher is often in inverse proportion to his fluency and facility. It is fatal to gain the mastery too young. George Eliot's criticism of George Dawson of Birmingham was that "he had the misfortune to speak too early and freely upon the greatest things." You cannot exalt Homiletics by ignoring the serious studies of theology. You must have something to say before you can safely speak. And yet the practice of preaching will keep Bible study from cold scientific theory and speculation, make all truth for life, and correct personal defects and de-

velop powers at the very formative time when such influences should be brought to bear upon the life. We should constantly practise preaching under criticism. It is in harmony with the laws of all mental and spiritual training.

The minister, more than any other of the so-called learned professions, needs the preparation of *general culture*. He must be a reader of some of the world's best books. He needs to be intelligent and appreciative in other fields than theology. Every candidate for licensure in the Church is properly examined in science and arts. These studies are supposed to precede a special theological training, and some study in the general field of culture ought to be continued as long as the mind retains its strength. We cannot know all things; we must know one thing well. The growth of the world's knowledge and literature makes selection imperative. But a system in work and a concentration while we work — something of the calculation and devotion that Austin Phelps of Andover had — will find the hour for general reading. And every minister can have some favorite study which shall be both the means of knowledge and recreation.

The urging of the wider preparation of cul-

ture is not the contradiction of the aphorism, "Beware the man of one book." There is always a danger in breadth. Wider interests may weaken the strength of conviction and cool the ardor of zeal. But we are to suppose that the enriched man will devote his full manhood to the work that God gives him. There are no wasted powers, no unused attainments and experiences to the man who has the single mission of giving the word of God. The mists from a score of peaks, the rain-treasures of a score of valleys, may all run bright and joyous in the current of his speech.

We are to have interest in the best thought of the world to enrich the life and preserve the health and balance of the mind. It is a law of our nature that we tend to become like the thing we do. Every work leaves its mark upon the worker. One faculty constantly used or used in one direction becomes fixed and worn in that way. And we must exercise other faculties and in other spheres of thought if our life is to be sane and wholesome, if even the religious faculties are to be true in their working. The minister, from the very seriousness and absorption of his work, more than most men needs hours of play and the exercise of thought in other spheres than religion.

Thomas Taylor, the Platonist, used to show with pride two of his fingers which, in copying out the manuscript of Proclus and Plotinus in a fine Greek hand, had been so bent that he had lost the use of them. Our studies of one subject often produce corresponding mental deformity. The mind may become morbid and untrue in judgment if kept in one continuous channel of thought.

Mr. Spurgeon was fond of wielding the geologist's hammer, and he likened his loved study to the opening of the windows of the mind that God's pure air might blow through its rooms.

We need general culture properly to interpret the word of God. "To read nothing but the Bible is the way not to understand the Bible," says Dr. Strong of Rochester Baptist Seminary, and his own study of the great poets for the past twenty summers has had a marked influence upon his growth and his conceptions of Christian truth. The Bible is the Book of human life — God's revelation in human history — and it must be interpreted and applied in the growing life of the world. Outside the Bible God has not left himself without witness. The Holy Spirit that spoke through holy men of old likewise brooded upon the face of the waters and lives in the vision of poet and

reformer, and teacher and statesman, the living Lord that makes possible the spiritual progress of the race. The very riches of the nations is to be gathered into His Kingdom. The man who has this view of the world, who finds divine meaning in letters and science and arts, who sees God's hand in history, who interprets the spiritual meaning of the struggles for social betterment, will have a different attitude toward the Scriptures, — he will be delivered from the hardness of the letter into the freedom of the spirit. A cultivated and full mind will be delivered from partial and eccentric views and aim to teach truth in its unity and harmony. Its rationality can be depended upon.

And the effect of broad studies and sympathies upon men is to be considered. They help to make influential men, leaders of the higher life of the community. Generous culture wins intellectual respect from men who care little for religion. It may be an open door into the sympathies of men, through which we may be able at last to take the Master and His message with us. "He never came into my shop," said a blacksmith of Dr. Norman McLeod of Glasgow, "without talking with me as though he had been a blacksmith all his life. But he never went away without leaving Christ in my

heart." Mr. Campbell of the London City Temple was the guest at the New York Press Club dinner because of his literary knowledge and sympathies. Interest in the common human life, familiarity with the best expression of it, will give the preacher a standing-ground of common experience with his hearers and clothe his message in the language of real life. "The sermon must have heaven for its father and earth for its mother."

And this general reading will *furnish rich materials* for the sermons. Topics that have interested men will be suggested, truths that have affected the conduct of men and shaped the direction of an age. We shall be better able to understand the forces that form the ideals and govern the conduct of the age. We shall be men who know the times — not the superficial currents, but the life-forces. And the illustrations of truth that bring it into the sphere of life, lighting it up by a common experience and giving it a personal, practical hold of men, will come crowding to us from such reading. The sermon reveals the poverty or riches of a man's thought and life. The great teachers have been the masters of the higher thoughts of the language. It is said of Dr. Farrar's sermons as Head-master of Marl-

borough: "These sermons will illustrate one of his strongest characteristics as a preacher, — the power, namely, of riveting great moral truths upon the mind by apt and striking quotations from the poets, which lingered in the memory even after the sermon itself was forgotten." [1]

We may study philosophy, not to philosophize in the sermon, — that would be to misuse both the pulpit and philosophy, — but to gain the power of keen analysis and exact definition, the knowledge of the human mind and the motives of life, and to make ourselves familiar with the progress of thought and the theories that affect the beliefs and movements of men. It is a fact that philosophy has largely shaped the conceptions of theology. Canon Liddon preached to a great and popular audience in St. Paul's, and he made the resources of his spiritual and intellectual life intelligible to the humblest hearer. He preached a simple and positive Gospel, and yet his sermons are an indirect record of modern thought in the phases of truth which he presented to meet popular error and strengthen faith.

History and *biography* help us to understand life and show us the essential unity of man. It

[1] "Life of Dean Farrar," p. 143.

is everything for a young preacher, placed perhaps in the isolation of a remote parish or in the unformed life and confusion of a modern city, to steady himself with a long perspective, to interpret events in the light of other times, to know what other men have experienced and achieved. There is nothing better than Missionary biography to strengthen one's own faith and courage, and stimulate the higher life of the Church.

Take Dr. Storrs's lectures on "Christianity proved by its Historical Effects" as the product of lifelong study of history. If our sermons could reflect something of this light on the Scriptures, they would gain force of argument and make intelligent and stable Christians.

The *study of nature* affects the thinking of men to-day as never before. It is the scientific age and some theory of development has conquered every realm of thought with the exception of theology. The preacher needs the spirit of the best men of science, the spirit of patience, thoroughness, and reality. And he would be a gainer by a genuine love of nature, that would often take him far afield in study or sport, in eager recreation or quiet meditation. Such a mind sees through a calm and pure atmosphere, and sometimes has revelations of life and of

divine truth not given to the student of books. It is something to make men see that this is God's world and to love it and use it as His children, because He called it "very good." But the use of nature must be genuine and first-hand. Hugh Macmillan shows us the Bible teachings of nature. And not long ago audiences of Glasgow mechanics were gathered and taught the chief truths of the Gospel, because those truths were clothed and illustrated in the language of science, and Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World" made an era in religious thought.

English literature, especially the nobler poetry, is in many ways the richest field outside the Bible for the preacher's training and treasures. Such study will be drawing from the pure well of English speech. You will get the use of the best and choicest diction. The preacher should be the constant student of language, both in the best literature and in the daily speech of men.

We want to grow in our *accurate* use of words, that the word may stand for the reality; in the *artistic* use, that the ideality of men may be reached; and in the *vernacular* use, that we may know the processes of men about us, and our speech convey realities, and not have a far-away sound.

And such study will strengthen and develop the imagination, the ideality, the power of vision, so vitally connected with the spiritual life. The power of truth over us is in proportion to our vivid realization of it and not in proportion to our assent to its formulas. Robertson of Brighton went to a club of workingmen whom he could not get to come to his church, and lectured upon English poetry and read many noble passages to them, not only because such thought is worthy of a man, but because poetry would break the spell of the senses, the hard routine of toil, and with its pictures of the ideal, its admiration for the beautiful and the heroic, would awaken the soul and make it conscious of spiritual capacities and cravings. Poetry will bring to you the great thoughts of the race, often inspired by the spirit of God, rich with symbols and analogies of divine truth. Every great English poet from Chaucer to Browning will help you to feather the arrows of truth, will furnish you with emblem or phrase impregnated with some word of God that will impinge upon the minds of men.

And lastly we shall get materials of sermons *out of men.* Charles Kingsley said that he

often got lessons of trust and hope from the bedside of the lowly which he took back to the same lives as God's ministry of comfort. Nothing can speak of God as a man may, and little children — "of such is the kingdom of heaven." We cannot live in books if we are to preach to lives. We cannot dwell in cloisters if we are to mould society. Sermons born of such seclusion will be pious monologues, rapt meditations, suggestive and beautiful perhaps, but utterly lacking in the power to reach the bosom and business of men. We are always to study life, and get as close to the hearts of men as we can.

Beecher says: "A man who would minister to a diseased body must have an accurate knowledge of the organs, and of the whole structure of the body, in a sanitary condition. We oblige our physicians to know anatomy and physiology. We oblige them to study morbid anatomy, as well as normal conditions. We say that no man is prepared to practise without this knowledge, and the law interferes, or does as far as it can, to compel it. Now, shall a man know how to administer to that which is a thousand times more subtle and important than the body, and which is the exquisite blossom of the highest development and perfection

of the human system; namely, the mind in its modern development, — shall he assume to deal with that, and raise and stimulate it, being ignorant of its nature? A man may know the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, he may know every theological treatise from the day of Augustine to the day of Dr. Taylor, and if he does not understand human nature, he is not fit to preach."[1]

And I think in this connection a glimpse at Mr. Beecher's habits of studying men would be helpful. It is found in the same lecture, p. 97. "You must be familiar with men; and you are fortunate if you have been brought up in a public school. There is a good deal of human nature learned by boys among boys, and by young men among men. That is one of the arguments in favor of large gatherings of young men. A man who has struggled out from between the stones of a farm, and who has fought his way through the Academy, with the pity of everybody, — a pity which might well be spared, because it was God's training, — has a fine education for practical life, because he knows men. The study of man is the highest of sciences.

"Besides this general knowledge we are to

[1] "Yale Lectures," p. 85.

have, we should take kindly to individual men, for the very purpose of studying them. Now I take great delight, if ever I get a chance, in riding on the top of an omnibus with the driver, and talking with him. What do I gain by that? Why, my sympathy goes out for these men, and I recognize in them an element of brotherhood, — that great human element which lies underneath all culture, which is more universal and more important than all special attributes, which is the great generic bond of humanity between man and man. If ever I saw one of these men in my Church, I could preach to him, and hit him under the fifth rib with an illustration, much better than if I had not been acquainted with him. I have driven the truth under many a plain jacket. But what is more, I never found a plain man in this world who could not tell me many things that I did not know before. There is not a gate-keeper at the Fulton Ferry, or an engineer or deckhand on the boats, that I am not acquainted with, and they help me in more ways than they know of. If you are going to be a minister, keep very close to plain folks; don't get above the common people."

The special effect of this sympathetic relation with men and knowledge of them upon

our preaching is well expressed by Dr. John Watson in a lecture on "The Technique of the Sermon." And because he comes upon this subject from another side, I quote the passage entire. He calls the fourth canon of the sermon *Humanity*. "One has heard able and pious sermons which might as well have been preached in Mars, for any relation they had to our life and environment. They suggested the address a disembodied spirit might give to his brethren in the intermediate state, where it is alleged we shall exist without physical correspondence. This detached sermon is the only credible evidence for such an unimaginable state, but otherwise it does not appear effective. While the preacher should be very sparing with 'I,' it ought to be possible for an expert to compose a biography of him from a year's sermons.

"If one live in the country, he ought to master ploughing and sowing and harvesting; if he reside in a seaport, he ought to know the docks, with their strange cargoes and foreign vessels; if his work be in a manufacturing city, he ought to have learned the processes; and if his lot be cast in a fishing village, then it is a reflection on him should he not understand the sailing of a boat. The minister ought to be soaked

in life; not that his sermons may never escape from local details, but rather that, being in contact with the life nearest him, he may state his Gospel in terms of human experience. No doctrine of the Christian faith is worth preserving which cannot be verified in daily life, and no doctrine will need to be defended when stated in human terms, — above all the language of home. The principle of vicarious sacrifice, for instance, that one person should get good from another's sufferings, may be proved to be true by texts of Holy Scriptures, and it may also be shown to be absurd by argument; but it may be placed beyond criticism by reference to a mother, through whose sufferings and self-denial the child lives and comes to strength. It was Jesus' felicitous manner to remove his Evangel from the sphere of abstract discussion, and to assert its reasonableness in the sphere of life. 'What man among you?' was his favorite plea. God does exactly what a man does or wants to do when he is at his best. The Divinity of a sermon is in proportion to its humanity." [1]

The wider your interests, the more you can do, the better you can preach the Gospel to men. And here is the real argument for gener-

[1] "Cure of Souls," p. 55.

ous culture and sympathies, not only that such a life is larger, with more resources within, more true delight, but chiefest that such a life has more ways to receive and understand the message of God, and more ways by which the Word may be given to others. Every gift and training is another side to God and to men. Cultivate then in these days of sentiment and association — when the world seems interesting and the light of hope rests upon all — cultivate friendships. Make fast friends of the men by your side. Compel yourself to think of others and have interest in all that concerns their lives. Mingle in society, rub up against men, have a part in the sports of youth. Despise no man.

> "He who feels contempt
> For any living thing, hath faculties
> Which he has never used; that thought with him
> Is in its infancy."

Learn to love the individual; in imitation of our Lord, become a friend of men, putting yourself in their place, that out of a sympathetic experience you may know how to help.

Through all this preparation is the thought of life. And the life that we are leading will have everything to do with our conceptions and our real work. The spiritual influence of a preacher in the long run is in proportion to his

character. An old minister once said in a charge to a young candidate: "Young man, you are called to this church not in the first place to preach sermons or make pastoral calls, but to live among the people the best life you can." All that makes a man disciplined, thorough, sincere, magnanimous, unselfish, helps the sermon. To have it said that you are a good man, — not simply that you preach good sermons, but that the unconscious impression of the man is good, — this is the strongest and most lasting force in preaching.

It is, therefore, well for us to think much upon the aim of the Gospel, in saving men from sin and developing a righteous life; upon the motive of our work, constrained by the love of Christ; upon the divine sanctions, God's message we are to give, and if "we separate the precious from the vile, our mouth shall be as God's mouth"; upon the coöperating agent, the Spirit of God, "who can take the things of Christ and show them unto us," and make our word a message and revelation of the Christ.

LECTURE IV

PREPARATION OF THE SERMON

OUTLINE

The method of preparation should be individual. The ethod that will best find and express the personal message.

1. The seed-thought.
   - *a* Does the subject or the text come first? Testimony of Phillips Brooks. Relation to habits of study and wealth of experience.
   - *b* The sources: the study of the Scriptures, reading, daily life.

2. The growth. The thought sometimes comes fully formed: again by long gestation.
   - *a* Truth always on the stocks. Testimony of Watkinson. Truth will gather form and substance from all experience. Some methods. (Bible-indexing, cards or slips.)
   - *b* Think for yourself. Take stock of your knowledge. Shape the thought for teaching. Make a plan for study.
   - *c* How the truth may become a living message. (1) Study the best helps. Enrich your thought by reading. Originality and plagiarism. (2) Meditate. (3) Pray. (4) Appropriate. The element of time in growth.

3. The structure.
   - *a* The theme. (1) The need. (2) Reasons for its statement. (3) Its relation to the text and the sermon. (4) What goes to the forming of a theme? (5) The wording of the theme: plain, clear, concise. Strong preachers marked for striking themes.
   - *b* The plan. The tendency to ignore or disguise plan. (1) The need of the plan for the preacher and the hearer. (2) What should be aimed at in the plan? (3) How shall the plan be made?

4. The expression.
   - *a* It should be your own, not burdened with quotation.
   - *b* It should aim to make truth clear and impressive.
   - *c* It should be adapted to the people.
   - *d* The influence of reading on expression.
   - *e* The use of the pen as a quickener of thought.

REFERENCES:

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Burton. "Yale Lectures," assimilation of sermon material.
Horton. "Verbum Dei." 6.
Simpson. "Yale Lectures." 5.
Dale. "Yale Lectures." 5.

LECTURE IV

PREPARATION OF THE SERMON

We have discussed the general preparation for preaching, the Biblical and general culture that fits a man to be a spiritual teacher. Now I wish to come closer to the actual work of preaching, and put gifts and training to use, set the man at work preparing his sermon. You have been in the power room or house of some great factory and there seen the working of the machine that conveys power to the remotest corners of the buildings. And I would have you use your imagination and picture the preacher at work and think of the processes by which study and experience become the message in its full form, the expression of truth and life.

The *method of preparation* should be *individual.* There should be no procrustean bed of sermon forming. If each man's life is not felt in the forming of the sermon, then the sermon is mechanical, it lacks life, and is not preaching in the best sense. Another man cannot tell you just how to prepare your sermon. Dr.

Parkhurst says that his own method is only a warning to young men. Whatever suggestion you get from others, or inspiration, you must take the method that will best find and express your personal message. But do not let your method be an accidental or superficial or thoughtless one. May it come from the knowledge of experience, what will best fit your powers, what you can do the best. Let me warn you that your best may not be the easiest.

"No two men are precisely similar, or think of truth alike, or see the men to whom they speak in the same light. Consequently the make of every man's sermons must be different from the make of every other man's. Nay, we may carry this farther. No live man at any one moment is just the same as himself at any other moment, nor does he see truth always alike; and therefore in his sermons there must be the same general identity combined with perpetual variety which there is in his life. And the making of every sermon, while it may follow the same general rules, will be a fresh and vital process."[1]

The Seed-thought. — The seed-thought is first. It may be a single text or truth, sharp and clear

[1] Brooks, "Lectures on Preaching," p. 144.

and authoritative, demanding utterance, from which you cannot escape. Some would say that a word of God always carries this sign of authority. It must find you and possess you before you have a right to speak. How it comes you may not always know, placed in your mind by the Spirit, caught from some daily study and experience, as the seed is put into the earth in a thousand ways. You uncover the rock, a little soil gathers upon it, and forthwith the seed springs up. You can trace the sermons of Phillips Brooks back to the seed-thoughts of his wide reading and meditation in his seminary days.

Does the subject or the text come first? Phillips Brooks says : " The history of a particular sermon begins with the selection of a topic. Ordinarily, except in purely expository preaching, that comes before the selection of a text. And the ease and readiness of this selection depends upon the richness of a man's own life, and the naturalness of his conception of a sermon. I can conceive of but two things which should cause the preacher any difficulty in regard to the abundance of subjects for his preaching. The first is a sterility of his own mind ; the second is a stilted and unnatural idea of what the sermon he is going to write must be " (p. 149).

The man speaks here out of the fulness of his own life and experience. Whether the text comes first, giving us our seed-thought; or from our reading or experience with men, some subject is suggested which we and other men need, and which we narrow into a definite theme and connect with some passage of Scripture, makes no great difference. It will depend upon our nature and habits of study and the depth and fulness of our experience. No doubt a man with years behind him will often have subjects first, but a young man will oftenest get his truth from his Scripture study. And the surest way to have rich and abundant suggestions for sermons is to be a systematic student of the Scriptures.

But the suggestions for sermons, the seed-thoughts, will come in many ways, often as many and strange as the carrying of seeds in nature: from our Bible study, our daily reading, our contact with other lives, personal struggles, the silence of the inner chamber, and our effort to help another life. If we have the instinct and the vision, we shall find them. The sound soul craves for truth as we do for light, and the preacher will have the trained instinct, as keen for truth that will help others as the hound upon the scent. And the Spirit

of God will bring to the open sensitive heart, to "a wise passiveness," the most vital impressions. The point is to be open-minded, trained to see, always looking, and then not losing the seed-thoughts through carelessness or lack of method. Whatever is helpful for preaching should be put down, so that we shall not forget it, so that we shall often see it, and so the processes of accumulation and growth may set in. Jonathan Edwards had a table and candle by his bed and put down any suggestion of truth that came to him in the night-watches.

The Growth. — How shall the seed-thought grow into the sermon? Sometimes the thought comes fully formed; it springs into full growth like magic before our eyes. The text, the theme, the plan, the development, stand like a wondrous vision before the mind. We may be grateful and also walk humbly as in the presence of God when such is our experience. It is not simply a fertile imagination, a deft facility of adjustment, but in the processes of the mind we must believe there is the working of the Divine Spirit. There are diversities of operations, and He is in the sudden vision and in the long toilsome process. Dr. George Matheson wrote the hymn that we love to sing,

"O love that wilt not let me go," in a few minutes, with no conscious effort, the words flowing from the pen as rapidly as the ink; but the long processes of life were in that moment of inspiration. The best sermons will grow, and growth is not the matter of a moment. It takes time, and we must allow for time in our method of sermon-preparation. Truth comes to its life by long gestation.

The first thing in growth is to have subjects always in hand — "truths on the stocks."

The Rev. W. L. Watkinson has well said: "The brain of a true preacher is always in a state of fermentation, and a hundred potential discourses await their hour. He has brooded over many things, and the thoughts of his heart are at length revealed by soliciting and stimulating circumstances."

It is wonderful how a thought in the mind will gather suggestion from the reading and experience of the day. It seems at times as though everything you did threw some light upon the truth. It is a magnet to gather all the helpful things of life. But without the truth in mind you will not gather and probably not even see. And the truth held in mind will not only gather from experience, but you

will find that it is a larger and richer truth by simply being held in the mind, by the silent processes of mental growth, and by the very life of the mind that seems beneath consciousness.

We must try to have subjects ahead, great truths or texts that strike us as helpful, and have some method to record the material that has gathered by reading and meditation. Some men index their Bibles. On the margin or on blank leaves opposite texts they write suggestions or references to books that come to them. The Bible thus becomes the catalog and storehouse of their life. A card or slip is a good plan, with the text or subject at the top and then the gathering of the days below.

By all means do your own thinking. Fix your thought upon the text and subject, and try to penetrate to its vital meaning. Find the message for your own soul in it. Believe in the spirit of truth and learn to trust your own judgment as enlightened by His influence. Do not go at once to commentaries and homiletic handbooks for material, but let your own thought grow by thinking. Take stock of your own mental and spiritual resources. Be thoroughly yourself and find your own voice, for in this way only will you have that personal and

individual flavor which makes the charm of true preaching.

Shape your thoughts for teaching; ask not simply for the truth for your own life, but how can this truth be spoken so that it will help other lives, and make what seems a practical working plan of your thought. By this process alone you may have all the truth you need to speak; at least, it will be a direction for your thought, a plan for further study.

And such study you will generally be led to make — driven to make. Your thought will suggest its limits rather than its resources, and you will feel the need of the quickening influence of other minds.

How shall the truth that God has given you grow into a living message ?

Study the best helps — whatever will help you to understand the Scriptures, correct or enlarge your own views, give to you the certitude of truth, strengthen your own convictions, and throw light upon its relation to life. I should not hesitate to read sermons on the subject, but I should prefer those on related themes, acting as inspirers of thought more than directly furnishing material.

An honest man will not suffer himself to use the thoughts of others save as he can assimilate

them and make them his own. He will be above the vanity of borrowed plumage. A homely garb is infinitely better than the finest garments of another. A sincere, genuine manhood will keep a man from plagiarism. He will wish always to be himself and true to himself. In a discussion on "originality and plagiarism" a recent English writer, Joseph Gowan, says: "Those who appear to have taken the soundest views of the matter and who have no crotchets, say that it is permissible to use the materials, the arguments, the illustrations of others, and that it is very rarely necessary to make acknowledgments. What is considered objectionable is the adoption of the writing of others, whether verbal or in substance, without any attempt at mental assimilation" (p. 53).

The whole question of thinking and reading is finely expressed by Richter, "Never read until you have thought yourself hungry; never write until you have read yourself full."

And F. W. Robertson, highly cultured and gifted though he was, needed the stimulus of other minds: "I have spent this evening in reading thoughtfully and meditating on Neander's 'Doctrine of St. John,' imbuing my mind with a tone of thought for Sunday next. I find

that to be the only way in which my mind works. I cannot copy, nor can I now work out a seed of thought, developing it for myself. I cannot light my own fire; but whenever I get my fire lighted from another life, I can carry the living flame as my own into other subjects, which become illuminated in the flame."

Meditation is an essential process if we are so to understand truth that it shall become a living message. It is not revery, the sweet doing nothing of thought. Meditation is the long and earnest brooding of thought, the strong and steady grasp of ideas, holding them before the mind until they become vivid, all-possessing realities; it is the rapt and eager contemplation of spiritual things. We must be still if we hear God speak; we must have the attentive eye if the glory of truth is to be revealed; we must think if we have anything vital to speak. "Talk, talk, talk forever, and no retreat to fructifying silence," is Dr. Horton's satire of a pulpit too busy or superficial to meditate. We must live on the ideal side if we are to be masters of truth and masters of human hearts.

And then we cannot know and speak God's truth well without frequent *prayer*. We can never charge the mind unless we are properly insulated. We have too many prayerless

studies and faithless prayers. We live by the daily impartation of the Spirit of God. We see the truth by the illumination of the spirit of truth. The sermon cannot pulse with the enthusiasm for humanity without the Spirit that sheds abroad in the heart the love of Christ. By our conscious seeking the preparation of the sermon should be begun and continued and ended in God. "To have prayed well is to labor well."

The *appropriation* of truth cannot be omitted in the preparation of the sermon. "Preach out of your own defects" was the sententious saying of the late Dr. Upson. You must preach to yourself before you can preach to others, might well be added. Truth must come not over the lips, but through the life if it is to be a word of power. A man can have a message only so far as he can experience the truth. "Realize in experience," said Dr. R. W. Dale, "without haste and impatience, the contents of the Christian revelation, and then you will be able both to think and to state them." Effective speaking depends upon the meditation and appropriation so that truth becomes a possession.

"Take time: the process of thinking especially should be prolonged; it is not so impor-

tant that the process of writing should be slow. It is when the subject has been long tossed about in thought that the mind begins to glow about it; the subject itself gets hot and begins to glow and flash, until at last it can be poured forth in a facile but glowing stream."[1]

The Structure. — The message must have definite statement, theme, and plan if it is to grow into an effective instrument of instruction and persuasion.

The *Theme* stands at the beginning of the definite sermon preparation. It defines the particular truth of the sermon, or it states the particular truth to be established and applied in the sermon.

The words "subject" and "theme" are used by many interchangeably, but it is a loose use of terms, the result of hazy thought and indefinite aim. The subject is general; the theme is particular. "Faith" is a subject; "The Promptitude of Faith"[2] is a theme. "Faith" is broad and general; it makes no affirmation or denial, it suggests no limits or purpose. The "Promptitude of Faith" is specific, gives definite relations, and has an unmistakable purpose.

[1] Stalker. [2] Matt. xii. 13.

The habit of newspaper notices often leads to a subject as more striking, as "The Pattern in the Mount" or "The Plough and the Kingdom," while a definite theme in each case directs the course of the sermon.

The *need* of a theme as distinct from a subject is easily seen. The tendency of every young preacher is to bring in truths not vitally connected, to discuss many things at the expense of singleness. Clearness of thought and distinctness of impression demand the use of a theme and not a subject.

A subject is often too broad a field for a single sermon; only a definite theme will keep from barren and uninteresting generalities. Robertson has a sermon on "Worldliness."[1] The subject apart from the definite materials of the passage would lead the average mind to commonplaces. The real theme is, "Why the Christian cannot love the world," and this theme Robertson unfolds with accurate and suggestive interpretation. Truth in Scripture is always stated with definite relations; it points in a particular way, and if we get the exact thought of the Word, we shall be saved from the trite and commonplace. Then it is a mistake to think that the general is the most

[1] 1 John ii. 15–17.

fruitful of thought. When we limit the view, the characteristic features will be seen. We are to use the microscope of reverent, eager study, to find and express the riches of a limited field. Every sermon, then, should have a theme for the sake of clearness, interest, and definite impression.

Shall the theme be stated?

It is good for the preacher and the hearer that the theme be given. The statement lays upon the preacher the obligation of clear, consistent, and continuous following, and the purpose thus held before all will tend to quicken the mental and moral nature.

Men cannot listen well without knowing the definite thought to be discussed. Many of the audience are untrained or indisposed to consecutive thinking. The moment the relation of thought is not understood, the mind begins to wander. There is interest also in following the theme. The mind finds pleasure in it, and so is open to the truth. The theme is needed for the audience to receive and hold and appropriate the thoughts of the sermon.

The distinct enunciation of the thought and purpose may sometimes be kept until near the close of the sermon, or form its conclusion, — and this in the case of unwelcome truth, whose

statements at the beginning might needlessly arouse prejudice and opposition. There is no deceit in such reserve, no method unworthy the Christian teacher. It is simply using common wisdom and tact, discussing truth on common and sympathetic ground, and so preparing the mind step by step to receive the full message at last.

Dr. Phelps truly remarks that it makes a difference whether one aims at the reason or the feelings. For men generally respect the utmost frankness and directness, however strenuously they object to the doctrine, when the preacher appeals to their reason.

Relation of the Theme to the Text and the Sermon. — The theme should contain as nearly as possible the exact thought of the text. As soon as it is announced, the audience should be able to recognize the fact that it expresses the essential message of the Scripture chosen. "The Blind Man's Creed,"[1] "The Hunger of the Soul,"[2] "Does it Pay?"[3] have this self-evidencing virtue. Then the theme should be identical with the substance of the sermon, and it should suggest enough for helpful and impressive discussion.

"One of the most noticeable things about the

[1] John ix. 25. [2] Luke xv. 7. [3] Matt. xvi. 26.

sermons of Horace Bushnell is the relation between text and theme. When they have been announced, he has already half preached the sermon. The theme is not a happy hint nor a catching phrase, but is the subject itself in little. He starts with a full conception of his discourse, not working his way into it, but working it out, having already gone through it. Hence it is not a tentative groping after truth, but the truth itself in brief, but clear, proportions. The title of the first discourse in 'Sermons for the New Life,' 'Every Man's Life a Plan of God,' contains his whole thought on the subject. It took a great truth out of dialectic theology, where it deadened action, and made it a living force. It was not a great sermon as compared with some others, but was great because of its timeliness and the shrewdness of its address. The text, 'I girded thee, though thou hast not known me,' matched the theme, each piquing interest and forcing attention."[1]

What goes to the forming of a Theme?

It is a practical question to ask, How should a man determine the form of his theme?

Two things will enter into the theme, — the knowledge of the text and the definite aim

[1] Munger's "Life of Bushnell."

of the sermon. Either alone will not be sufficient. The knowledge of the text will make a man accurate and scriptural, but he may be lacking in timeliness and point of contact. The aim alone considered may make the theme direct and practical, but lacking the flavor of the text and the authority of Scripture. Both together determine a man's theme.

We are to get the knowledge of the text first, its exact logical or historical meaning. That will usually give the general subject. Then what shall we do with it — will shape and sharpen it into a specific theme.

What shall we do with it? The special aim of the sermon will usually be determined by two considerations. What is the special message that the text brings to my own heart? A text that has no message for the preacher has none for the church. A man must first preach to himself if his word is to find the reason and conscience of other men.

Then you will ask what special need of men may be met by this truth? Do others feel as I do? What is there in the lives of my people that shall determine me to preach this truth? The preacher implies the student of men — the insight into the forces of life about him; and the lover of men, that sympathetic in-

terpretation of their lives that shall find the exact message of God for them. What the truth is and what we are to do with it will shape the theme.

The wording of the Theme. — Should a theme always be worded differently from the language of the text? Dr. Phelps makes the strong affirmation that it should, and he bases it on the ground that the theme is the interpretation of the text, and there is no interpretation if the exact words are used. But this statement seems based on a misunderstanding. The theme gives the thought of the text — that's interpretation. But if the thought stands out single and unmistakable in the very words of the text, then no other words are needed.

And many texts are put in the best possible form for themes. They are such as they stand.

"Can a man be profitable unto God?"[1] "Who can forgive sins but one, even God?"[2] "Lord, to whom shall we go?"[3] are examples of texts that make the best themes as they stand. They cannot be clearer, and change of phrase would weaken their force.

Another question often asked about the theme, Should it be in plain language? Are

[1] Job xxii. 2. [2] Mark ii. 7. [3] John vi. 68.

figures ruled out? Here again Dr. Phelps lays down the unvarying law that the theme should be in plain, never figurative, language. I cannot agree with him. It seems arbitrary and slavish.

The theme is the place for clear thought. The appeal is made to reason and intelligence, not to emotion. The feelings should not be aimed at until the basis is laid in rational thought. So the theme should avoid the imaginative and emotional elements as the rule. I once heard a sermon on "The Gospel most exactly, wondrously, divinely adapted to the nature of men." The string of adverbs with their evident aim at the feelings was decidedly out of place. But some texts are so imaginative that to translate them at once into plain prose destroys their life and power. Is. xii. 1 is one of them, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Alexander Maclaren's "Wells of Salvation" is better than any attempt to reduce the figure to a plain proposition.

On the whole, the statement of the theme should be *plain*, *clear*, and *brief;* it should contain the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The greatest care should be taken in its statement that the audience may

at once understand the theme, and also clearly see the practical end in view.

The theme may be so stated as to be not only clear but suggestive and striking, carrying almost the force of argument. Horace Bushnell held that the statement of the subject might be half the battle, and his own themes were certainly such, as in his famous argument against woman suffrage, "Woman suffrage, the reform against nature." The strong preachers are noted for their striking themes. Any list of modern sermons will be convincing proof of the fact :

Ps. cxix. 54, "Obligation a privilege."
Rev. i. 9, "The efficiency of the passive virtues."
Matt. vii. 21, "Religion the doing of God's will."
John i. 4, "Light the outcome of life."
2 Chron. xxix. 27, "The joy of self-sacrifice."

The Plan. — It is true that plan-making is somewhat out of fashion to-day. The tendency is to ignore or disguise plan. The desire to make the sermon a literary form, to give it singleness and life, accounts for the dislike of the formal structure. A few great names perhaps have set the fashion ; one of them in spite of himself, for he says : "In the desire to make the sermon seem free and spontaneous,

there is a prevalent dislike to giving it its necessary formal structure and organism. The statement of the subject, the division into heads, the recapitulation at the end, all the scaffolding and anatomy of the sermon is out of favor, and there are many very good jests about it. I can only say that I have come to fear it less and less. The escape from it must be not negative but positive. The true way to get rid of the boniness of your sermon is not by leaving out the skeleton, but by clothing it with flesh. True liberty in writing comes by law, and the more thoroughly the outlines of your work are laid out, the more freely your sermon will flow, like an unwasted stream between its well-built banks." [1]

One of our strong preachers has said that if he had to teach young men Homiletics, he would put them at the making of plans. And he attributes much of his own success, humanly speaking, as a preacher to his early discipline in plan-making.

The Need. — The need of the plan is seen in the strength and weakness of sermons. Some men begin to write sermons as Rousseau said a love-letter should be written, "Begin to write without knowing what you are going

[1] Brooks, "Lectures on Preaching," p. 177.

to say, and finish without knowing what you have written."

The sermon needs a plan as much as a building, a painting, or a human body. It needs the plan as the expression of thought and feeling. Order is a law of the mind. Perfection means finishing according to a pattern. The sermon is expression for a holy purpose. Its purpose of instruction and persuasion calls for arrangement. The best approach to the mind, the ways of arousing interest, of affecting the sensibilities, all demand the wisest forethought and preparation. A sermon without form may be a void. A sermon formless and aimless, with the prayer for the Holy Spirit to make up for human weakness, is the voice of cant and not of an honest and thoroughgoing piety.

Plan-making is a help to the preacher.

It quickens invention. Truth stands related to truth, and the effort to set material in order calls forth suggestion.

It leads to close study and thought. The plan reveals the suggestiveness or poverty of the thought. It gives a true inventory of stock, and prompts the seeking of other riches.

It helps to keep the discussion in proportion, the points developed in accord with the im-

portance of truth, and the purpose of the sermon.

The most common defect of the sermon is malformation, truth in wrong proportion. In young men it often happens, through lack of clear vision and wise arrangement, that the first part of the sermon will be overdeveloped; while the last part, where the fulness of energy is expected, will show a carelessness and weakening of thought and imperfect treatment. It is as though the map of the country should be drawn with New York on a scale ten times larger than the other states.

A good plan helps the *style* of the sermon. The plan supposes theme and purpose, and these give a certain intentness and eagerness to speech that help to make it simple and direct and persuasive.

Order is especially needed in *extemporaneous preaching*. It helps the memory to retain and reproduce, without conscious effort, the steps already thought out. The failure of memory is probably a failure in arrangement.

Repetition, wandering, discursiveness, the weaknesses of extemporaneous speaking, will be corrected by clear and orderly plan. Earnestness, conviction of truth, inseparable from all effective preaching, is vitally connected with

arrangement. Profound conviction is the result of clear seeing. How can we see clearly until the parts of the subject are properly arranged before the mind? An artist will say that the drawing of an object is the help to the proper sight of it. Every line of the pencil or brush in the hand of the artist is a thought put in its right place — to work toward the conception of the whole. Arrangement of the sermon is simply putting each thought in its proper place, to produce a vivid conception of the whole.

Neglect of plan-making leads to loss of *constructive power*. While the mind loves order, and demands it for clearness and force, the order will not come of itself, but only as the result of constant discipline. The habit of arranging is the *constructive* training that the mind constantly needs. The power once gained will not be preserved without exercise. It may be weakened and finally lost by disuse. If we feel strongly, will not feeling find its own path without previous planning? Has not passion a natural order, and the best order? Such is the claim of Dr. Broadus in his plea for freedom of speech. But passion is connected with perception, and this depends on order. To have a vivid perception of any truth is to see it

in order — its parts put together into a whole. And when feeling, without long thinking or any apparent plan, finds voice that goes straight to the hearts of men, it will be found the result of this clear conviction and previous training. The man who reaches the freest, most impulsive expression of truth will gain his power through the discipline of order.

The plan is as important for the *hearer* as for the preacher. It makes the sermon *intelligible*. Thoughts must be put in order, and all irrelevant matter rigorously left out, if truth is to be conveyed to other minds. Without arrangement impressions may be conveyed that are partial and even untrue.

A true plan makes the sermon *attractive*. The beauty of structure is a proper element to touch the sensibilities and act upon the will. But this beauty depends upon the thoroughness of analysis and then the truthful and exact synthesis with which the elements are put together again.

And finally a plan makes the sermon *persuasive*. The understanding must be reached before the will can be moved. Conviction precedes emotion. Simply to instruct and argue is not then enough; there must be movement in it. All our thoughts must be successive blows

hitting the same spot of the flinty heart, or strokes to bring before the mind the completeness of the picture and aiming at singleness, — unity of impression. Such speaking is more than mere continuity. Thoughts must not only not break the thread of the discourse, but they must add to the final impression. How can this be effected without the most careful disposition of our material? No man should speak upon religious truth without knowing what he is to say and how he is to say it.

What should be *aimed at* in the plan?

Simplicity. — We should not strive to see how many things we can bring together in one sermon; but how clear and attractive and impressive we can make a few things. It is sometimes our duty to show the splendor of truth and the breadth of its relations; but in general to aim at singleness of impression. Not only does singleness of impression demand simple arrangement, but the memory of the truth. A very simple plan developed with varied material will make the most lasting impress.

Mr. Warner has finely said that simplicity is the element of all immortal literature — and it might be added, the element of lasting impression in preaching. And the taste of the best pulpits is ever striving after a *simple plan.*

The growth in simplicity of plan is seen by comparing the sermons of Flavel with those of the late Dr. R. D. Hitchcock. The sermon taster in Dr. Watson's story, with the points of the sermon remembered by the pans upon the pantry shelves, is a gentle satire at the minute and complex schemes of the older sermons.

Naturalness. — We often feel the mechanical and artificial plan of our sermons. The points can be truly made and they are in logical order, but there is no life in them. That has been killed by our analysis; its beauty and fragrance gone with the division of its elements. The best system holds the evil of the mechanical. Training often leaves the impress of the artificial.

The cure of this is to make laws and models only helps, not masters. We should strive to be independent and individual in the setting forth of truth. Within the general laws of order, there is room for great diversity, and this we should seek after, — the form that is natural to us, and that is best fitted to the particular truth to be expressed. Let us away with all that is perfunctory and professional; the life of truth in us should find a *living* way to the hearts of others. The danger in plan-making is sameness. Robertson has his two-fold divisions with their lessons, and Alexander

Maclaren holds to his three points as sacredly as to the Trinity. It takes a strong life to speak through such monotony of structure: "Three divisions, three subdivisions and application. Like houses in a block, all alike, same front, three floors, three rooms on a floor, and an attic."[1]

How shall the plan be made?

It will come in many ways, sometimes suddenly and fully shaped like an inspiration, the whole truth bodied forth in vision; and again it will be made only after long study and repeated trial. A trial plan is often helpful as a means of study, but the plan of the sermon should be the arrangement of the final thought. And one is not to be satisfied with anything short of the best plan.

The Expression of the Sermon. — The expression of the message of the sermon will be discussed more fully under the questions of style; but in this brief preview of the forming of the sermon, a word should be said about the expression of the thought.

It should be your own. The materials should be taken into the life of your own

[1] Also see Vinet's "Homiletics," p. 76, on the danger of overanalysis.

thought and feeling and expressed in your personal way. Within the general principles of good style there should be room for the play of personality. It is easier to fall into conventional expression, or to imitate some other writer, but such a method cannot be the expression of yourself. It requires more concentration and training of thought, more use of the will to put the truth in your own way, but such is your Christian duty: it is the moral element of style. A sermon that is overburdened with quotation is often the sign of immature and undigested thought, or a thoughtless and indolent way of speech.

The aim should be to make other people see and feel as we do; to make our truth perfectly clear so that the audience cannot fail to understand, and try to make it so impressive that they shall feel the motives that such truth should give. If our daily prayer, as we write or speak, would be that we might be simple and sincere, we should be saved from many errors. George Meredith remarks that "we see so little because bent on describing brilliantly." And Mr. Huxley, whose Lay Sermons are a fine example of clearness and simplicity, says, "I have learned to spare no labor on the process of acquiring clear ideas, —

to think nothing of writing a page four or five times over if nothing less will bring words which express all that I mean, and nothing more than I mean ; and to regard rhetorical verbosity as the deadliest and most degrading of literary sins."[1]

And Dean Church of St. Paul's emphasizes the same truth : "The great thing in writing is to know what you want and mean to say, and to say it in words that come as near to your meaning as you can get them to come. That is the old and true rule of writing, because it is based on the effort after reality, and is the countercharm to laziness and negligence, and to show and make-believe. After all, self-restraint and jealousy of what one's self-indulgence or vanity tempts us to is the best rule in writing, as in eating."

It should be adapted to the people. Hence, the sermon must be unselfish in style. It need not be vulgar — the purest speech, yet such as the people will gladly hear.

Reading not only maketh a full man, but trains the power to a varied style. There ought to be more freedom and variety and adaptability in the man who is familiar with

[1] Quoted in "Nineteenth Century Preachers and Preaching," p. 97.

the writers and speakers who have so expressed their thought as to live beyond their own time.

Whatever be your method of preaching, the use of the pen is a quickener of thought and a trainer of expression. You will not preach well unless you write much. Bishop Boyd-Carpenter urges writing as a part of preparation, whether you speak or read your sermon. "It is by thinking with your pen that you will find your way into the heart of your subject. Write till your mind is perfectly clear, and till you certainly know your own thought and faculty of expression."

LECTURE V

SCRIPTURE AUTHORITY IN PREACHING

OUTLINE

1. The use of texts.

Shall the sermon have a passage of Scripture to limit and direct its message? Involved in the very idea of preaching as a message of God.

a Positive reasons.

1. It may give the sermon the authority of revealed truth.
2. It creates interest in the study of the Scriptures. The Bible in the pulpit made England the people of one book.
3. It helps the memory to retain the truths of the sermon. Verses become rich with the thoughts of noble minds, a storehouse of Christian ages.
4. It limits the theme of a sermon; is the best trainer of speaker and hearer.
5. It gives unity to preaching. The twofold unity, logical and rhetorical.
6. It gives variety to preaching. No mind or group of minds can originate or set in such suggestive or subtle combinations the truths of religion. The Bible can be preached. These reasons imply the expository spirit. The two hopeful tendencies: the inductive method of Scripture study, and regarding the Bible as a history of divine principles to be applied by each age to its own problems. Must the sermon always have a text? "It may be very Biblical without a text, and with a text not Biblical at all."

b General rules for the choice of a text.

1. Genuine. Scholarship thorough. The words of uninspired men. They may be striking testimony to great truth. Mark ii. 7, John vii. 46.
2. Complete. Demanded by respect for sacred writers. Practical limitations of the rule, Claude, Vinet. Governed by unity and integrity of passage, and its suitableness for preaching. Logical not linear measure.
3. Important. (1) Exclude odd and eccentric texts. (2) Exclude personal texts. The choice of great themes.
4. Texts of striking and suggestive form. (1) Truth in concrete statement. (2) Avoid obscure texts. (3) Familiar texts not to be avoided. Need new symbolism and broader relation. (4) Short texts. (5) A double text. The force of antithesis.
5. An orderly choice. System in preaching, symmetry of doctrine and life.

c The reasons for the choice of a particular text.

Past work, present need, personal taste. "The consideration of all three makes preaching always strong and always fresh."

LECTURE V

SCRIPTURE AUTHORITY IN PREACHING

THE modern pulpit is the product and servant of Christianity, the teacher of an historic faith, the materials and authority of which are found in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The preacher's use of the Scripture is then a matter of first importance.

The Text of the Sermon. — Shall the sermon have a passage of Scripture for a text? As preaching involves the giving of a message of God, the question of the text must be answered on higher ground than long-established custom. How shall a preacher be sure to have a word of God? It is the faith of the Church that the Old and New Testaments give the word of God; the record of a providential history; the record of holy men speaking the truths of religion and of the final word incarnate in

Jesus Christ. Then preaching must be the unfolding and application of some truth in harmony with Scripture. We can be sure that we are giving a message of God only as our speech harmonizes with Biblical truth and breathes the Spirit of Christ.

Positive Reasons for a Scripture Text in Preaching. — The proper use of a text makes the sermon Biblical and gives to its sentiments the authority of revealed truth. The corner-stone of Protestant faith is the authority of the Holy Scriptures in their given domain of morals and religion. We hold them as the infallible rule of faith and practice.

And the world everywhere needs not guesses at truth, but the positive teaching of a reverent and humble student of the Scriptures: the "I know, therefore have I spoken" of one who has a deep personal experience of the living word. Men need authority, not the authority of dogmatic assertion or priestly class, but of the all-searching and satisfying truth of Christ. We are messengers of truth, ambassadors of Christ. A Scripture passage gives the mental expectancy of a Divine message, and honestly followed gives an authority to the simplest speech not gained by mere reason and eloquence.

The use of a text creates interest in the study of the Scriptures. It magnifies the Scriptures, lodges the statements of Scripture in the mind, and leads to further study of the Scriptures. The people who the most regularly hear the Scriptures read and explained, taught from the pulpit, will be found the most diligent students of the Bible in their homes. The new, free Bible in the pulpit, not only the source of the sermon but its material also, helped to make that noble, pregnant period in English history, when England was the people of one book, so read that it colored the very speech of every day.

The text helps the memory to retain the truths of the sermon. The text may be short and striking, holding the truth in a concrete fact or personal experience, and so help the memory to keep ready for spiritual use the thoughts of the sermon heard or read. Thus the Bible grows to be a record of personal religious life. The steps of religious growth are marked in its pages. Its verses become precious memories of spiritual awakening, larger views of truth and life, and hours of holy affection and aspiration. Thus the Bible becomes the storehouse to the disciple against the years of famine. The truths from count-

less pages and many lips are stored here. And as the Scripture is read, memory will often bring the sweetest food for spiritual strength. How the simple verses of Scripture are heavy with the thoughts of noble minds — teachers of the race! "Then went in that other disciple" — the simple record of a fact in the life of a humble man is associated in thousands of minds with "Unconscious Influence," the notable sermon of Horace Bushnell. "One thing I know" will suggest the manly strength of Dr. Parkhurst's sermon on "The Blind Man's Creed." So is memory used by the Holy Spirit to sustain the spiritual life of the world.

A text *limits the subject* of a sermon. It is the message, and the messenger is bound to give it as he received it, not adding to or taking from its essential truth. A subject clearly defined and consistently carried to the end, or the materials of a passage set in clear order, is the best logical training of the mind, and the training of the hearer in clear and logical thinking. But is not the adherence to a text the cramping of the powers of speech, the fatal limiting of the powers of the mind? On the contrary, every studious pulpit testifies to a larger freedom and richer variety than

could come from the choice of any single mind.

So the text gives *unity* to preaching. A text may have a twofold unity: a logical unity and a rhetorical unity. A logical unity is where all the parts are capable of being brought into a single proposition.[1] A rhetorical unity is one of impression — the truth or truths affecting the same emotion and leading to a single action.[2] It is evident that such unity is desirable in the sermon for the sake of clear thought, distinct impression, and so effectiveness. And a text that has a single chief thought or whose truths are so related as to make the same impression will help the unity of the sermon. If the sermon is true to the text, it must be marked by singleness.

And finally, the text promotes *variety* in preaching. Such a result flows from the nature of the Scriptures. A book or books with such a history, slowly gathered through the centuries by so many different minds, — a world-history of religious feelings, motives, conditions, then finally the Gospel of the Son of man, and the practical application of its truths to manifold conditions, — here truly is heavenly riches. No mind or group of minds could

[1] Mark ii. 7. [2] Matt. v. 1–8.

originate or set in such suggestive and subtle combinations the truths of religion.

The Bible is a book that can be preached; it is true in an equal sense of no other book, proof that it is the Gospel treasury. The Scripture, and here is the chief utility of texts, presents truths in a form more salient, more pointed, more accidental, than that of abstract presentation — truth in life and character and so of infinite variety.

You will see at once that these reasons for the use of a text suppose the expository spirit in preaching. What saith the Scripture? What is the mind of the Spirit? We are to be anxious about nothing so much as that we preach only the Word of God. The caring less about what men think and more about the teachings of Scripture, the desire to use the expository method, are hopeful signs for the pulpit. There has been too much of the deductive method — *a priori* spirit. First, men had the doctrine or subject and then went to the Bible for text and proof. And too often the desire affected the vision. The inductive method is now being emphasized. Get the facts and truths of Scripture. Let all the light upon them possible of language and history and literature and science. It is the scientific

method of study, and is giving a diviner life to the Bible. It should be noticed that with the expository method there is another strong tendency due to the application of the Gospel to social questions, and to the enlarged view of the Kingdom of Christ as touching every true sphere of life. So the Scriptures are viewed not chiefly as a treasury of texts for the preacher, but as a history of Divine movements, the statement of Divine principles, which each generation must apply to its own problems by the aid of God's Spirit.

A practical question here arises, Must the sermon always have a text? Does it fail to be God's message without a text? Surely not. Vinet (p. 96) says: "What gives a Christian character to a sermon is not the use of a text, but the spirit of the preacher. It may be very Biblical without a text, and with a text not Biblical at all." The pulpit may need to speak of some special need or duty of society and find it difficult to find a single passage of Scripture properly teaching the exact phase of truth. Then do not hesitate to unfold and apply what you hold to be the law of Christ without a text. Far better to do this than to have the only connection between Scripture and sermon that of sound. In a series on

"Popular Sins," a sermon was preached against "Smoking" from Paul's words to the jailer, "Do thyself no harm."[1] But in most cases where a specific Scripture statement of the truth is not found, some Scripture can be used that implies it, or a related truth; so used as a general announcement or starting point of the discourse. If this is used frankly, there is nothing inconsistent in it. The text is not a pretext; the sermon is scriptural.

In conclusion, I should use a text for the reason that such a usage well represents the idea that we are the ministers of the Word of God. It holds the fact before the audience, and helps us to realize it. But we can give the Word of God without a text; and it is our duty to do so rather than trifle with the Scripture.

General Rules for the Choice of a Text. — It should be a *genuine* text of Scripture, not a spurious or doubtful passage.

Our scholarship ought to be good enough to save us from preaching on Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" or viii. 37, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," or 1 John

[1] Acts xvi. 28.

v. 7, "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father and the Word and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." I should not use any verse or passage of whose genuineness there may be any serious doubt. This, of course, would exclude Mark xvi. 9–20 and John viii. 1–11, the Christlike story of the Master's dealing with the woman taken in adultery. Whatever be the loss, and no truth is lost, a proper respect for the Scriptures will demand the use of an undisputed text.

Closely allied with this law is the question, Shall we use the sayings of *uninspired men?* There can be no objection if they are taken for what they are worth. They are a part of the Scripture narrative and often give striking testimony to some great truth; as, Mark ii. 7, "Who can forgive sins but God?" and John vii. 46, "Never man so spake."

The text should be a *complete thought* of Scripture. Respect for the sacred writers demands this, or the inspiration of Scripture is only speculative theory. To cut up the Scriptures, like so much merchandise in lengths to suit the users, is treating it as we should be ashamed to treat any other book. This law of decent respect shuts out all sermons on "A Little While," or "But," or any other eccentric

fragment. However, there are some practical limitations of this law. *Claude* says, "The text must contain the complete idea of the writer from whom it is borrowed ; for it is his language which we are to explain to our hearers." *Vinet*, commenting on this rule, says: "I do not adopt the rule of Claude. I content myself with a sense complete in itself, provided it be conformed to the thoughts of the sacred writer. . . . I think we find a complete sense and consequently a text in every series of words from which an attentive mind can draw out a proposition, and which is adequate in itself." [1]

Neither of these laws by itself is sufficient. Each properly limits the view of the other.

Take the first, — the complete thought of the author. 2 Cor. i. 3–4,[2] — "The Divine Use of Comfort." Anything short of the complete text fails to give the thought of Paul. Yet we know that sometimes in the Scripture many thoughts are related, and in such a writer as the Apostle Paul, abundant in matter, impulsive in utterance: one thought closely joined to another (by a hidden tie at times) often makes it impracticable to select the complete sense of the writer for the text. The text

[1] Vinet, pp. 139–141. [2] Phillips Brooks's Sermon.

should not be limited by a purely accidental circumstance. Matt. vi. 9, — "Our Father which art in Heaven" may be a proper text, though not the limit of the thought of the writer. Heb. xii. 1, a proper text, though the writer's thought includes verse 2. In this whole matter of the limits of a text, we must be ruled by the unity and integrity of the Scripture passage, and its suitableness for public teaching. We must apply logical, not linear, measure. It is a field for sanctified common sense.

The text should be an *important thought* of Scripture. This would exclude *odd* and *eccentric texts*, and would greatly diminish the stock in trade of the cheap, sensational preacher. "Old Shoes and clouted upon their Feet," "The Nine and Twenty Knives," "The Unturned Cake," and others of like odd character have been chosen and forced to render forth some lesson of spiritual truth. Dean Swift preached the annual sermon to the Associated Tailors of Dublin from the text, "A *remnant* shall be saved." A New England minister once preached to the newly married couples of his congregation from Ps. lxxii. 7, "And abundance of peace so long as the *moon* endureth." And this buffoonery in the garb of Holy Writ is one of the sins of the modern

pulpit. Any list of Sunday services in a great city will show specimens of it — cheap rivalries of the concert hall and the theatre. It receives the sharpest condemnation from thoughtful laymen. Says one, "Every trick of successful advertising in other departments is imitated, but in no single case is the imitation ever so clever as the original." Mr. Whitelaw Reid, at a meeting of the Church Club of New York, protested against the modern tendency toward sensationalism in pulpit advertising. "The newspapers are for chronicling the news, and it is the preacher's duty, not to talk of news, but to describe proper conduct on this life, and to teach the congregation things that shall be for their eternal welfare."

A genial humor and even wit have their place in the pulpit: means of attraction and impression if natural and joined with deep sympathy and moral earnestness. But it is certain that a sanctified taste will not seek the eccentric and odd statements of the Bible and do violence to the plain letter of their books.

The strong words of *Baxter* are fitting here: "Of all preaching in the world that speaks not stark lies, I hate that preaching which tendeth to make the hearers laugh, or to move their minds with ticklish levity, and affect them as

stage-players used to do, instead of affecting them with a holy reverence of the name of God." [1]

It would exclude *personal texts*, all that would fix unpleasant attention, be discourteous to the audience, or set the preacher before the message. *Examples*, — Phil. iii. 2, "Beware of dogs," on the funeral of a child bitten by a dog. Ps. xii. 1, "Help, Lord! for the godly man ceaseth," after the unsuccessful work of an evangelist. 1 Sam. iii. 4, "Here am I," a first sermon in a parish. Against the temptation to choose texts of a personal nature I would set a few simple principles. We are never to be guilty of a violent accommodation of texts. The true theory of clerical influence is against them. We have power not by the novelty of statements, but by the divineness of the doctrine and earnestness of life. It ignores the power of modesty. Truth is effective as the person is lost in the truth. And we have no right in public speech to invade the privacy of domestic life.

An earnest nature can never be satisfied with curious glimpses of truth, mere side-lights; he must ever deal with the essential, central truths and duties of the Gospel. So the preacher

[1] The place of humor in the pulpit. See Phillips Brooks's Lectures, pp. 55–57.

should ever make the choice of *great themes*. He needs their inspiration, and in the brief hours of his pulpit work he cannot afford to deal with anything less. The great preachers bring the loftiest motives to bear upon the humblest duties and lift the smallest things of life into the sweep of great truths. "I suppose that all preachers pass through some fantastic period when a strange text fascinates them; when they like to find what can be said for an hour on some little topic on which most men could only talk two minutes; when they are eager for subtlety more than for force, and for originality more than truth. But as the preacher grows more full of the conception of the sermon as a message, he gets clear of those brambles. He comes out on to open ground. His work grows freer and bolder and broader. He loves the simplest texts, and the great truths which run like rivers through all life. God's sovereignty, Christ's Redemption, man's hope in the Spirit, the privilege of duty, the love of man in the Saviour, make the strong music which his soul tries to catch."[1]

We should seek texts that give truth in *striking* and *suggestive form*. We shall find

[1] Brooks's Lectures, pp. 17–18. See also John Hall, "God's Word through Preaching," p. 113.

truth in concrete statement, in individual life, not in general and abstract forms. Good examples are found in Dr. Bushnell's Is. xiv. 5, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." Every man's life a plan of God ; or the other side of the same truth by Dr. Parkhurst from Ex. xxv. 40, "Look that thou make them after the pattern that was showed thee in the Mount."

This suggestion will lead us to avoid texts that are obscure in thought. If the language only is obscure, they may create interest, and be used, provided that we are able without undue time in explanation to make the thought clear. But if the thought itself is obscure, beyond the power of clear analysis, little good can come from their discussion. Much prophecy is of this nature, that so often leads to fantastic and profitless interpretation.

Are *familiar texts* to be avoided? Not if they are among Luther's "Little Bibles," the Gospel in miniature, and are rich with the most precious associations of Divine blessing. But such texts make greater demand upon the preacher to lift them out of triteness and commonness, and give them the splendor and dignity of new symbolism and richer relation and application.

It is still better to unfold the same truth from

a new passage, to show the richness of Scripture and impress the universality of its truths. John iii. 3 is the familiar text for the doctrine of "The New Birth"; but Matt. xx. 12 gives the same truth in a more striking connection. For the example of a suggestive way of treating a familiar verse, see Dr. M. R. Vincent's sermon on Matt. xvi. 26, "God and Bread," p. 21.

Shall a *long* or *short text* be chosen? Of course no rule can be given as to the length of a text. But in general, it should be as short as is compatible with completeness. Short texts are more easily remembered. They allow of emphatic repetition, clinchers of argument. And they are more likely to result in concise and effective sermons. A vivid and energetic mind will naturally seek short texts and the sermons will be direct and convergent and the minds of the audience awake and active. Even in expository preaching it is generally best to choose a short text that gives the key-note of the passage.[1]

Shall a *double* text be used? A single connected passage is more likely to give unity of treatment, singleness and convergence of impression, and so is the natural method of choice. We should avoid the mannerism of con-

[1] See Shedd's "Homiletics," p. 166.

stantly seeking antithesis, affected by some who use the double text. However, the proper use of antithesis adds light and power to the truth. The double text may also be used to reconcile seeming contradictions or to gain accumulation of truth and authority from different parts of the Scripture. Bishop Huntington has a good example in his "The shame and glory of the Cross," Matt. xxvii. 32, Gal. vi. 14. Dr. Cuyler has a favorite sermon in which the threefold text marks the successive divisions: Gal. vi. 5, "Each man shall bear his own burden"; Gal. vi. 2, "Bear ye one another's burdens"; Ps. lv. 22, "Cast thy burden on the Lord."

An Orderly Choice of Texts. — This implies some system in preaching: the choice of such truth and in such order as shall best win and instruct men. There is danger of a narrow view of personal need, and the dwelling upon certain truths to the exclusion of others just as vital. Some men so project themselves in all they say as to give an unworthy view of the Gospel, not the simplicity and fulness of Christ.

The pulpit will inevitably scatter without some plan of study and subjects. Many pulpits fail to give the symmetry of truth. They do not build up a stable, thoughtful Church because there is so little system in their own

study and teaching. The Church Year has this great advantage, that it fixes the mind of preacher and people upon the chief facts of Christ and compels their orderly treatment. The free pulpits must be no less thoughtful. There should be a plan that will give the preacher an increasing mastery of the message of Christ and give a growing faith to the Church. It is well to have frequent series of sermons growing out of exegetical study, and carefully to keep the balance of truth and duty.

Shall we regard all parts of the Scripture as equally to be used in public instruction? Such a view ignores the fact that the Bible is a growth, that it contains a gradual unfolding of truth. Some parts of the Bible contain few helpful passages for the pulpit, while others are charged with the great messages of the Gospel. While we should not ignore any part of Scripture in our study, it is not possible to know all parts equally well — and the central truths we must not fail to give.

The Reasons for the Choice of a Particular Text. — What practically shall guide us in the choice of any particular text for the pulpit? Three things may enter into the consideration, — past work, present need, and personal taste.

Past work has already been touched upon in

the orderly choice of texts. A man's choice should be governed in some respect by the truth he has lately preached. Will this truth add to the impression of the last sermon, will it help to round out the truth or is some entirely different truth to be taught for contrast or relief? These are perfectly proper tests that every wise minister will apply. A minister is to study effects on souls of truths, with that same keen interest and wise adaptation as an artist does form and color, or a doctor his prescriptions.

Then the personal need of his parish. Of course, the preacher implies the pastor. We are to study souls as well as truths. We cannot preach to men in the lump. We are to write individuals upon our hearts as the watchword of our ministry. This study and care of individuals will make us sensitive to their need and direct us to some helpful and timely truths. However, we must guard against taking the need in too narrow a sense.

Then the personal need and taste of the minister may direct. A Scripture passage that awakens no special interest in us, no joy of discovery, no passion for utterance, — however important the truth may be or fitted to another life, — for the time being it is not our

message. We need to receive the word of God, have the sense of direct and personal message, before we can speak the word with any power to others.

"These three considerations then settle the sermon's topic. Evidently neither is sufficient by itself. The sermon preached only with reference to the people's needs is heavy. The sermon preached for symmetry is formal. The sermon preached with sole reference to the preacher's wish is whimsical. The constant consideration of all three makes preaching always strong and always fresh. When all three urgently unite to settle the topic of some special sermon, I do not see why we may not prepare that sermon in a solemn exhilaration, feeling sure that it is God's will that we should preach upon that topic then; and when it is written, go forth with it on Sunday to our pulpit, declaring, almost with the certainty of one of the old prophets, 'The Word of the Lord came unto me saying.'"[1]

[1] Brooks, "Lectures on Preaching," pp. 153–156.

LECTURE VI

SCRIPTURE AUTHORITY IN PREACHING — (*Continued*)

2. The interpretation of texts.

a Duty of true interpretation. Every reason for a text is also a reason for honest interpretation. Further reason is the error and confusion from wrong interpretation.

b Chief sources of error in interpretation.

1. Failure to understand the language of the text. Scripture subject to the laws and difficulties of speech. Verbal precision, but approximate. Variety of style in different authors and periods.
   - *a* We must understand the language of the Bible; the Hebraistic and Hellenistic coloring of thought; the capital words, etc.
   - *b* We must remember the popular and poetic nature of Bible language.
   - *c* That ideas gather accretions, that each writer is both product and force, to be understood in the light of his times.
2. Disregard for the context of the passage.
   - *a* The context gives form and color to the text, positiveness of meaning, Acts x. 15, Luke xvii. 5, Ps. cxxvi. 5.
   - *b* The context saves from positively wrong teaching, Col. ii. 21.
   - *c* Causes of disregard of the context. Mechanical theory of inspiration. Forgetting that the book is literature as well as a storehouse of proof texts. Arbitrary division into chapters and verses, disregarding the logical and historical nexus.
3. Improper spiritualizing. Abundant basis for the allegorical in nature and the Bible. History of allegorical interpretation. Proper ways, improper ways.

c The laws of interpretation.

1. Seek to find the exact and proper meaning of the words. Verbal accuracy.
2. Study the relation of text to its setting. Logical and historical accuracy.
3. Interpret figuratively, when reasonable. Presumptions in favor of literal meaning. The only true accommodation the resemblance in principles.
4. Interpret by the teaching and spirit of Christ. Theologically and spiritually accurate.
5. Inferential lessons. (1) Do not make the incidental thought the theme. (2) Avoid too strict and narrow interpretation. (3) In the desire to be evangelical, do not read into the text what plainly is not there. "We must not give to Old Testament texts a degree of spirituality which they cannot have." — Vinet. The authority of preaching in the sincerity and thoroughness and divineness of its teachings.

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LECTURE VI

SCRIPTURE AUTHORITY IN PREACHING — (*Continued*)

The Interpretation of Texts. — To understand and express the thought of another not only demands an adequate mental training, the understanding of the laws of language and unwavering obedience to them, but the deeper condition of spiritual sympathy, the fellowship of life. It should be the ambition of the preacher to be able to say in some degree as Paul did, "We have the mind of Christ."

The duty of true Interpretation. — Every reason for a text is also a reason for honest interpretation. A passage from the Scripture is no better than any other passage unless we use it truthfully. Rightly to divine the word means to reproduce in modern ways of thought and speech the exact mind of the writer, or to teach the principle and duty reasonably suggested. To treat the text as mere motto, to use it allegorically and by accommodation, to spiritualize it (in common parlance), is to give

free rein to human fancy. And in too many cases it has been anything but giving the message of God.

The cases of wrong interpretation have been so many, the wrong habits are so persistent, the babel of tongues has been so confusing, the Christian Church, the body of Christ, divided into so many warring members, that the duty of honest interpretation is laid upon every man's conscience who would be a teacher of the Word. From the mistakes of the past, we can draw some practical lessons as to the sources of error.

Chief sources of error in Interpretation. — Failure to understand the *language of the text.*

The language of Scripture demands the same care as the study of any other language. The divine truth has been put in human speech and is subject to the difficulties as well as the laws of speech.

We know that precision of words is but proximate. There is every variety of style, as we might expect from so many different periods and authors. And the possibility of misconception is not unreal. Every translation realizes the difficulty of conveying the exact thought of a foreign idiom, the exact emphasis and proportion of thought.

Then — we must study the original languages of the Scriptures or get the best results of such study in others. We must understand the Hebraistic and Hellenistic coloring of thought. The *capital words* that mark certain books, that run through the New Testament, "world, flesh, mind, heart, sin, faith," and such like, must be filled with Bible ideas, and be so taught that men will not base on them errors in doctrine and life.

We must remember that Bible language is often popular and poetic, and partakes of the love of symbols, and even at times of the oriental tendency to hyperbole.

It diminishes Eph. v. 11 and augments Luke xiv. 26. It uses the absolute for the relative, Luke xiv. 12, and the relative for the absolute, Luke xviii. 14. It generalizes or particularizes, is full of synonyms and parallels, and rarely deals in scientific classification. "Just what atonement is, I cannot tell you, since the Biblical terminology is all of it figurative. But this I may believe, and this I must believe, that the atonement, in which I cast the anchor of my hope, is not temporal but eternal."[1]

We must remember that ideas may gather accretions, different shades of meaning, and that

[1] Hitchcock, "Eternal Atonement," p. 26.

each writer is both product and force, to be studied and understood in the light of his times.

A second source of error is the *disregard* for the *context of the passage.*

A verse does not stand alone, but has its place in the narrative or teaching, and the exact direction of its teaching can rarely be understood without its context. Like a landscape, it must have perspective or it is flat and meaningless.

The context gives form and color to the text, positiveness of meaning. Acts x. 15, "What God hath cleansed make not thou common" is understood only in the light of Peter's training and prejudice. Luke xvii. 5, "Increase our faith," gets new meaning from Christ's teaching of forgiveness. His standard is so far above them that they cry out for an increase of the very capacity of faith. Ps. cxxvi. 5, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," is full of meaning to one who understands the agriculture of Palestine.

The context saves from positively wrong teaching. Col. ii. 21, "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch," the stock text of temperance reformers, can by no honest interpretation be made to teach the duty of total abstinence.

Why have men so often disregarded the context of Scripture?

From the mistaken view of the Bible, considering every word and part equally divine, forgetting the fact that the Bible is a true evolution, and that there may be degrees of authority. From a mechanical theory of inspiration, exalting the letter and not the spirit. From considering the Bible as an armory of proof texts and storehouse for texts of sermons — and not history and poetry and biography and letters. And so as a result of this partial view, the determination of finding some word of God, some divine lesson in every fact and statement of Scripture. As the natural sense did not yield the truth, the doctrine of the double meaning was taught, and the habit of spiritualizing began. In modern times, the arbitrary division of the Scriptures into chapter and verses, with the Genevan version the printing of each verse as a separate paragraph, led to a disregard of the logical and historical nexus of the passage, and the undue use of short texts.

Another source of error in interpretation has been suggested in the last division, viz.:

Improper spiritualizing.

I say improper spiritualizing, for both nature and the Scripture give abundant basis for the

allegorical. Nature is rich in symbols. Hugh Macmillan's "Bible Teachings of Nature" and Henry Drummond's "Natural Law in the Spiritual World" make us realize that nature shadows forth truths that are spiritual and eternal.

The history of the Bible is illustrative of the history of the soul. The New Testament writers do not hesitate to use its history, prophecy, persons, as types of Gospel truths. The Old Testament is full of types and shadows of the good things to come. So Jesus himself speaks of Moses and Jonah.

So there is a natural tendency to spiritualize that finds strong warrant and rich illustration in nature and the Scripture. We need to see truth embodied, and the craving of the mind for pictures, object lessons, seeks to find such symbols on every hand.

The historical beginning of improper spiritualizing is easy to trace. Philo of Alexandria (contemporary of Christ) first gave it impulse and authority. Origen in the third century made it common in the Church. Most of the Greek and Latin Fathers are guilty of it. After the first impulse of the Protestant Reformation had somewhat spent its force, the rage for spiritualizing overcame the sturdy Saxon good sense. The Puritans are especially guilty of it, and

their spiritual descendants to-day have not wholly cleared themselves of the taint. Such a noble career as Mr. Spurgeon's has given a seeming authority to it. The evangelists, as a class, with much God-blessed power, are guilty of this perversion of Scripture. It has a natural attraction for an intense and fervid mind that would make all life and events, especially all of Holy Scripture, tributary to soul-winning.

It may not be possible always to draw a distinct line between the natural and spiritual, the true and false, use of the Scripture. But we are safe to be guided as far as the Old Testament goes by the usage of the writers of the New, and in the New by a sanctified common sense.

The history of preaching is full of examples of fanciful interpretation. Two examples of modern preachers will show easily the tendency to shade off the natural interpretation into the fanciful in the desire to find spiritual lessons in the simple incidents of the Bible.

The text is Mark vii. 33–34, and Mr. Spurgeon discusses from it "The Plan of Salvation for Lost Man," with the following plan: (1) "Jesus took him aside." The soul must be led into loneliness that it may feel its individuality. (2) "He put his fingers into his

ears." The source of the mischief is indicated. Sinners must be convinced of their state. (3) "And spat." The Gospel is a simple and despised means. The sinner must be humble to receive it. (4) "Touched his tongue." Further sense of mischief indicated. Our sense of need grows on us. (5) "He looked up to heaven." All strength must come from above. (6) "He sighed." The sorrows of the healer are the means of our healing. (7) "Be opened." The effectual word of grace.

Alexander Maclaren treats the same text in a more consistent and suggestive way. His theme is "The Pattern of Service," suggested by the manner of the miracle. And his plan has four points, the spiritualizing of the four significant steps in the action: (1) The heavenward look; (2) the sigh of compassion; (3) the touch of pity; and (4) the word of power. It is not easy to tell where one is justified and the other is not; but the latter is the work of a careful interpreter, and the other of one who is determined to read into every passage his ideas of the doctrines of grace.

The proper ways of spiritualizing are by inference, by suggestive principle, by illustration. The wrong way is by playing upon

words, finding the resemblance in mere sound or circumstance.

The Laws of Interpretation. — Seek to find the exact and proper meaning of the words. Be verbally accurate. The change in the translation of a single word in the Revised Version, Acts iii. 19, brings out the great truth that spiritual quickening depends upon repentance. And the use of a preposition in Heb. vii. 16 suggested to Horace Bushnell his notable sermon on "The Power of an Endless Life."

We are called to be students of the Word. We must work our way at whatever personal cost into the soul of the writings. Shall we not have the spirit of thoroughness that pushes every word to its root, and relations and atmosphere compelling it to yield its utmost suggestiveness?

Study the relation of the text to its setting. Interpret logically, in view of the connection of thought, the immediate connection in context, or the more remote one in the general meaning and spirit of a book. John vi. 68 is to be understood from Peter's previous experience with Jesus. Rom. xii. 1 is interpreted by the argument of the Epistle.

Interpret historically, in view of the geography, customs, persons, systems, touched by

the passage. Col. ii. 9 can be only understood by the beginning of the gnostic heresy.

Interpret figuratively, when reasonable. The reason must be more than a fanciful resemblance. The only true accommodation is a resemblance in principles. But we must remember that the presumption is in favor of the literal sense, unless the language is known to be figurative. And, furthermore, that we are not to base doctrine on unfulfilled prophecy.

Interpret truth by the light of the teaching and spirit of Christ. It should be theologically and spiritually accurate. I do not mean to say that every passage should be made to teach what we may hold to be a system of truth. We should not be so anxious for a system as to let every fact and teaching of the Scriptures speak for itself. But any interpretation that seems to contradict the simple words of the Lord Jesus is probably a wrong interpretation, and any teaching of ours will be unscriptural and so fail, however true in theory, if it does not breathe the very spirit of our Lord.

Certain inferential lessons of interpretation may be grouped together.

The incidental should never be made the chief thought or theme. Mark viii. 1–9, "Duty

of relying on one's self," Matt. ix. 1–8, "The behavior of Christians in view of public confidence," are evidently not the chief meaning of the passages.

It is possible to be too strict and narrow in interpretation. We may carry the principle of the text into other applications. Gal. vi. 7, "The law of the harvest," is properly carried into the spiritual realm. And we advance from the precise point of the text to related truths. Is. lx. 22 and Amos iv. 12 are universal principles truly derived from historical facts.

In figurative passages, we must not press the figure beyond the lesson intended. It is a common error in dealing with the parables. Matt. xiii. 33, "The leaven," has been interpreted as evil to fit a theory of Christ's second coming. Some illustrations run parallel with the truth, while others touch at a single point. Unexpectedness is the single likeness in Christ's coming as a thief.

We must not read into a text what is plainly not there, in the desire to be evangelical. We must deal with the Scripture in as broad and trustful a spirit as the Scripture itself. We must trust to the whole of our teaching for the balance and symmetry of impression and not upon a single sermon.

Treat each passage as it is; do not try to read into it some doctrine of grace that is not there. Matt. xx. 29–34 is not a model of Christian faith; Luke xix. 37–38 is not the whole of the Christian system. "We must not give to Old Testament texts a degree of spirituality which they have not, and which they cannot have." [1]

If our preaching is to give the real message of God, it must be essentially truthful in its interpretation of each passage of Scripture chosen. Away with all conjury of words, all jugglery with the Bible! Let us not tolerate in ourselves a lazy or unscholarly use of what is false to the present knowledge of the text. Ethical integrity demands accuracy of knowledge and honesty of interpretation. A fraud is no better because named pious. An untruth is no less an untruth because it suggests beautiful sentiment and a religious lesson. The authority of the pulpit is not in its claim but in its truthfulness. Men must learn to trust us for the accuracy of our spiritual insight and the sincerity and sobriety of our judgments. For the truth derived from the Scripture, the processes of reasoning, the lessons applied, the entire intellectual product, must be rational and

[1] Vinet.

moral, commending us to every man's conscience in the sight of God. The pettifogging spirit, the vice of the special pleader, have no business in the pulpit.

Every minister who honors the Word and respects his calling has a work to do in saving the pulpit from the odium of lawless fancy. "Oh! you can make anything of the Bible!" should not lie against the plainness of the Word and the sincerity of its teachers. We must help to relegate to the past the idea that for any error —

> "Some sober brow will bless it,
> And approve it with a text."

Then men shall respect the pulpit for its fairness and thoroughness and the divineness of its doctrine. The unfoldings of the Word shall be more trustworthy than the unfoldings of nature, and the God of the Bible shall be the living God who speaks by His servants to the heart of man as really as through Isaiah or Jeremiah to the heart of Israel.

LECTURE VII

THE INTRODUCTION

Not always needed. The theme may be the first sentence. Generally demanded by preacher, truth, and audience. "The first five minutes of the battle are the decisive ones."

1. The object.
   - *a* To prepare the mind to understand the truth.
   - *b* To gain attention and interest.
   - *c* To secure good-will. The first words may open or shut the heart. The wisdom and sympathy of Paul.
2. The important qualities.
   - *a* As to thought.
     1. Vital relation to the theme. Etymology of the word. Directness and brevity. The folly of apologies.
     2. Particular, not commutable.
     3. Unity. Not distinct or independent lines of thought.
     4. Suggestive. Original philosophic remark, dynamic elements of a scene, striking points of a narrative. Interesting, yet dealing with accepted truths, carrying reason and conscience to the theme.
     5. Harmony with the theme. Characteristic of the thought of the sermon.
   - *b* As to style.
     1. Simple and quiet; conversational, not too finished. The question of illustration.
     2. Modest. Free from all affectation of excellence or humility. "Any expression of egotism or of conscious authority at the beginning of the sermon is offensive to true manhood."
3. The varieties of introduction. The material found in text and context, the subject and occasion, and hence a great variety of approach.
   - *a* Explanation.
   - *b* Narration or description.
   - *c* Drift of thought that led to the special declaration of the text.
   - *d* Particular thought of the context that leads to the theme.
   - *e* Person speaking or persons addressed.
   - *f* Comparison of Scripture with Scripture.
   - *g* Summary of the truths involved.
   - *h* Analogy or illustration of the truth.
   - *i* Reference to season or occasion.

The introduction, to be simple and natural, ought to be written first.

REFERENCES:

Phelps. "Theory of Preaching." 16–19.
Broadus. "Preparation and Delivery of the Sermon." pp. 241–247.
Pattison. "The Making of the Sermon." 10.

LECTURE VII

THE INTRODUCTION

THE first words are important words and often the hardest to speak. John Bright, though the prince of extemporaneous speakers, so felt the importance of the first impression that he usually wrote the introduction. Every strong preacher is noted for his good introductions, and every beginner is more apt to fail here than anywhere else.

It is not necessary that every sermon should have an introduction. The theme itself may sometimes be the first sentence. The nature of the subject, its evident connection with the text at once demanding attention, the occasion, the condition of men's minds, eager and alert, the connection of previous sermons, may all demand the omission of formal introduction. It should not be used without good reason. "Young men," said Edward North, a famous professor, to a class of freshmen, "let your first sentence be upon the subject, and your last, and every sentence between."

Some introduction, however short, is generally demanded by the preacher, by the truth, and by the audience. A gradual approach is natural, it is customary in all kinds of address, and the truth is served by it.

The Object. — The *introduction* may prepare the mind for the *understanding* of the truth. In the setting of the text or in its words there may be difficulties to be explained, obscurities and misconceptions to be removed. Until explanation clears the path to the truth, there can be no common ground for preacher and hearer.

The introduction may win the *attention* and *interest* of the audience. Minds indifferent or opposed to the truth are to be attracted. Minds absorbed, prepossessed with other things, are to be quickened. It is important for the preacher that the audience should be ready and attentive when the truth of the sermon is stated. A bright illustration, a suggestive remark, a striking principle, will help to awaken the minds of men.

The introduction may secure the *good-will* of the audience. The first words are powerful in removing or creating prejudice, in opening or shutting the heart. We are not always sure

of the personal sympathy of men — either sympathy with us or with the message we give.

All audiences are moved by the personal influence of the speaker, by his method, spirit, personality. Therefore a wise preacher will avoid at first whatever is blunt and repellent. He will be considerate and winning; with the wisdom of the Apostle Paul he will search for some common ground of belief or interest with his hearers, so that at the beginning he may win their sympathetic attention. "A great analyst of the art of public speech as it was brought to perfection in Greece (Aristotle) said that a speaker must convince his hearers at the very outset: first, that he has their interests at heart, next, that he is competent to interpret these interests, and thirdly, that he is free from the taint of self-seeking."[1] To gain the good-will of men, the preacher must have deep respect for their intelligence, and profound faith in their spiritual nature and desire. He will speak as a man to men, as one who knows them and believes in them and sympathizes with them. He will put the truth forward and keep self out of sight. As a young man, he will rarely begin with a personal experience or whatever calls attention to himself.

[1] "The Puritan Pulpit," by Dr. John Brown, p. 173.

He must make the impression of an earnest, reverent nature, bent solely on the message of the hour.

The Important Qualities. — Such being the uses of an introduction, what kind of an introduction should we strive to have? What qualities should mark it?

As to *thought.*

It should have *vital* relation to the theme. The very etymology of the word, leading into, suggests this quality. Vital relation means directness. It will not begin too far back and it will not dwell on truths casually related, or go aside into chance digressions, however interesting, but move to the theme with the directness of earnest purpose.

> "But why such long prolusion and display,
> Such turning and adjustment of the harp;
> And taking it upon your breast at length,
> Only to speak dry words across its strings."
>
> — BROWNING.

The sermons of F. W. Robertson are all marked by the vital relation of the introduction to theme, notably the sermon from John vii. 17, "Obedience, the organ of spiritual knowledge."

From vital relation it follows that the introduction should be *particular*, not commutable,

fitting the particular text and not others. "It ought to do this so perfectly that no other introduction will be thought of that would do it as well. If such be its character, it will seem to be necessary to the discourse." If the introduction will fit another subject equally well, it is not in the best sense introductory. No two should be alike. There are some general introductions that may fit sermons of a class, as those on the miracles or the parables; but they are to be rarely used, and a suggestive mind will find something in the text or its setting to make the introduction individual.

The introduction should have a *unity*. There should be a central thought to which all others contribute, or a single line of thought leading directly to the theme. Two distinct and independent thoughts, each of which might lead to the subject, make a double introduction, distracting the mind and unfitting it to accept and follow the theme. It must be remembered that there are two kinds of unity here, — logical and rhetorical. The logical demands a single line of thought, the common form of introduction; the rhetorical may have several lines, all preparing the way, leading to the same impression, gathering into one path to the theme. In Dr. Parkhurst's sermon on "The Blind

Man's Creed,"[1] there are three distinct elements: John's interest in the blind man seen in the full account, the peculiar relation of the blind man to Christ's plan, and the blind man as the first confessor. And these apparently different introductions have a rhetorical unity, together answering the question, What is there of special interest in this case?

The introduction should be *suggestive*. It will avoid generalities and abstractions and commonplaces. It will unfold some new or deeper meaning of a word, state some significant principle or observation, give the distinctive points of a scene or the striking elements of a narrative. It should be attractive and quickening, and yet on the whole touching familiar things, or dealing with accepted truths, so making no demand for extended argument, and carrying reason and conscience inevitably to the theme. In this respect familiar texts make a greater demand, calling for freshness and inventiveness. In Dr. M. R. Vincent's sermons, "God and Bread" (p. 21), is a good example of a common text and theme given new life by a suggestive introduction.

The introduction should be in *harmony* with the theme. A sermon that has instruction

[1] John ix. 25.

for its purpose, the calm appeal to reason, would not be helped by an introduction full of pictorial qualities; while a sermon abounding in imaginative feeling is not naturally introduced by logical processes. There must be a fitness in the thought of the introduction, characteristic of the thought of the sermon. It will not anticipate or suggest the sermon, and it will cover everything that needs introductory remark.

As to *style*.

The style of the introduction should be *simple*. It should not be too studied and finished. The words and order should be so simple and natural as at once to reach the mind and heart, conveying intelligence and sympathy. The audience are cool and critical at first, and would be easily repelled by faults that might be overlooked in the later warmth of the sermon.

At first the audience are not ready to respond to passionate address, and so the style of the introduction is properly quiet and conversational. All forms of exclamation and personification, all that makes strong appeal to feeling, is here out of place. It should be bright and warm, but free from the marks of special emotion or grandeur. Dr. Phelps forbids all illustration in the introduction, but the rule is too

severe. A writer in the *Homiletic Review*[1] names a list of texts for which a full illustration is the most natural and effective beginning, — "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree":[2] "After a picture has been presented which may serve in some degree as a substitute for real acquaintance, then and not till then can the speaker begin to show that a devout soul in an evil generation does really resemble the palm tree."

Not only do some truths demand illustration as the best opening, there are audiences that can be awakened and won in no other way. But such a beginning creates great expectations and consequently makes greater demands upon the preacher. An example of a quiet and simple introduction for a great and impressive theme is found in Dr. Bushnell's sermon on "Dignity of Human Nature shown from its Ruins."[3]

It should be *modest*. It should be marked by large faith in men, simple address to the moral nature, but without thought as to the person of the speaker, his authority, experience, and opinions. There is an impersonal quality in all the greatest truth and art. We are to remember that our own life is never so vocal,

[1] Vol. XXIV, p. 122. [2] Ps. xcii. 12. [3] Rom. iii. 13–18.

never so effective, as when we lose sight of self in giving the truth. So our first words will be free from all affectation of excellence or humility. "Any expression of egotism or of conscious authority at the beginning of the sermon is offensive to true manhood."

It would be well also for the preacher never to apologize for lack of preparation or physical condition. It has often been the trick of great speakers to lower the expectation of their audience and so heighten the effect of their address. But it is unworthy of the Christian pulpit. Whatever his condition, let the preacher do the best he can, without excuse.

The Varieties of Introduction. — The material for the introduction is found in the text and the context, the subject and the occasion, and so furnishes a great variety of approach to the theme.

It is not wise to make a detailed list of introductions and spend time on their distinctions. The following examples will show the variety and individuality of the strong preachers in their opening words.

Examples. — Explanation of words. Bushnell, "Sermon for the New Life," p. 304.

Narration or description. Parkhurst, "Blind Man's Creed," p. 1.

Drift of thought leading to the special statement of the text. Alexander Maclaren, "Secret of Power," p. 155.

Thought of the immediate context that determines the theme.

Person speaking or persons addressed. Parkhurst, "Blind Man's Creed," p. 96.

The comparison of Scripture with Scripture.

Summary of truths involved. Parkhurst, "Blind Man's Creed," p. 15.

Analogies of the truth. Vincent, "God and Bread," p. 153.

Reference to season or occasion. Phillips Brooks, Vol. I, p. 157.

Practical Suggestions. — The context may naturally furnish the introduction, but nothing is more monotonous in preaching than the unvarying use of the context. One should never use any form of introduction unless it is the best for the particular sermon. Study the natural approaches to the mind, the genius of each text and the best way to it, and be so alive as to feel the atmosphere both of the truth and the men to whom you speak. Make the introduction original but not eccentric, bright and timely but not sensational. Above all, begin on the level of your audience : find some common ground of belief, experience, feeling. There is

no place where invention can be used to better advantage than here.

When should the introduction be prepared? It is claimed by some that the introduction should be the final work, as the best approach can only be known when the sermon is finished. But such a statement implies a lack of prevision and careful plan. If the sermon is a full vision before it is written or spoken, then it would seem to be more simple and natural for the introduction to come first in time as well as place. It may need to be corrected and even rewritten, but in its essential form it will come first in the mind. However, this is not a matter for rule but for individual judgment and common sense.

LECTURE VIII

THE DEVELOPMENT

Development comprises all the methods of discussion: the choice and arrangement of the materials by which the theme is unfolded.

1. The twofold problem: analysis and synthesis.
   - *a* We divide to show the elements of truth, to distinguish the vital from the accidental. Analysis chiefly for instruction.
   - *b* We combine, repeat, show in different light, apply in many spheres for persuasion. The older divines analyzed; the present tendency is synthesis. Spurgeon and Phillips Brooks examples of the two methods. A tendency toward freedom, variety, individuality, living expression is good; but synthesis must follow analysis.
2. The topical and textual methods.
   - *a* Topical: definition, advantages, and difficulties.
   - *b* Textual: proportion in treatment, special need of exposition.
3. The general principle of development. Adaptation. Theme, audience, and preacher to be considered. Largely a question of utility. One strong argument better than many weak ones. A fertile thought should be enlarged. "Amplify rather than multiply."
4. The kinds of division. Divisions may be made by propositions, explanations, observations, examples. Each one of these may be according to the parts of the theme or text.
5. The special laws of division.
   - *a* As to substance.

1. Each should have a vital force. Each point connected with the theme and a genuine unfolding of it. Not a secondary or accidental thought.
2. Each should have a distinct character. Not a mere modification of another point. Each a distinct advance. These two laws would save the pulpit from needless division and inferior argument.

b As to style: the points in words, clear, concise, brief. No matter of explanation and development in their wording. Similarity of form often helpful.

c As to order: no best or necessary order. No sudden break in the order of natural suggestion and growth. Different ways. Order of logical necessity, value of ideas, time, abstract to concrete, personal interest. Hoppin's "Homiletics," p. 394.

6. The transitions.
   a The perfect transition is one of thought, not phrase.
   b Suggestions.
      1. The thought relation vital: a ligament, not a clasp.
      2. Interesting, yet subordinate to the division.
      3. In words and phrases avoid formality.
7. The announcement of divisions. Preannounced? Whenever it will help the preacher or audience. The danger is the loss of anticipation. Recapitulation is often more intelligible and impressive. Avoid too formal announcement. Make them doors, not dams.
8. Effective qualities in development. Life always preferred to mere perfection of form. But there are structural channels of life.
   a Unity. Singleness of idea. Avoid needless explanation, quotation, illustration, digression. But do not fear repetitions of the same idea in new forms and spheres.
   b Order. The secret of power often lies in arrangement.
   c Movement. The life of the sermon, the genius of climax. Involves continuity and progress. Suggestions of Archbishop Magee.

REFERENCES:

Phelps. "Theory of Preaching." 26–29.
Broadus. "Preparation and Delivery of the Sermon." pp. 260–277.
Ellicott. "Homiletic Lectures." 1.
Pattison. "The Making of the Sermon." 11.

LECTURE VIII

THE DEVELOPMENT

DIVISION, the common word with writers on preaching, means the steps by which the discussion of truth is carried on. It is apt to suggest a single method of the sermon. Development is the broader and happier term, and comprises all the methods of discussion, the choice and arrangement and expression of the materials by which the theme is unfolded.

The twofold problem is the proper use of **analysis** and **synthesis**.

We separate into parts, we divide and subdivide, that the truth may be seen in its elements and relations, that the essential may be distinguished from the superficial, that only those vitally related may be used. This process gives the sermon its clearness and order. It is the analytic method, the favorite one of logical minds: the one to be used if the chief purpose is instruction.

We add to, combine, repeat, show in different lights or apply in many spheres, if the chief purpose is persuasion. It is the *synthetic* method. It is not so anxious for form as for life and impression. The framework never protrudes. The sermon is the expression of life, and forms are used or thrown aside as they voice the thought and feeling on its errand of grace. The older preachers analyzed; the tendency of recent preachers is to neglect or disguise it. Spurgeon and Phillips Brooks are good examples of the two methods in our generation. Mr. Spurgeon's sermons are like a map, the whole work laid out before the eye, each part distinct and in its place. Bishop Brooks's sermons are like a tree, all the growth from a single seed, truth organic and inseparable, unfolding from within until the complete life is attained.

As far as the present tendency, the reaction from extreme analysis, is in the interest of freedom, variety, individuality, it is a good tendency. The pulpit is too often dry and lifeless through its formality. Text-books of Homiletics, the drill in sermon-making, must emphasize the form. Men must learn to be clear and orderly in thought. But the very next step is sterility unless the man is strong in originality and heart impulse. "Skeletons, 1 to 97, and only

skeletons without the Holy Ghost," was written on one of Mr. Spurgeon's note-books.

"Preaching is in a sense teaching, and there can be no good teaching without an orderly arrangement of material. On the other hand, preaching is oratory, and there can be no persuasive oratory without continuity of feeling, unimpeded flow of emotion."[1] The synthetic tendency must be controlled in the interest of clear and logical thinking, and by the law that instruction must precede all deep and lasting emotion.

The Topical and Textual Methods. — All sermons may be classified as topical or textual. There are many ways of classifying sermons according to the viewpoint of the writer. The mode of delivery may divide sermons into written, memoriter, extemporaneous; the subject-matter into doctrinal, ethical, historical, biographical; the kinds of discussion into explanatory, observational, propositional, applicatory. But the simplest classification is by the mode of treating the text. Under this classification most writers (see Shedd, Broadus, Pattison) treat of topical, textual, and expository sermons. Dr. Phelps adds a fourth, the inferential. Now a careful study of the plans under these four

[1] Foxell, "Sermon and Preacher," p. 22.

methods will make it evident that the names are imperfect. The same principle governs the development of the topical and the inferential, while the textual and expository differ only in the length of the text. There are then but two kinds of sermons if we classify by the modes of treatment, — the topical and the textual.

The topical is a sermon in which the theme is derived from the text, and developed independently of the materials and order of the text. Luke xv. 17, The sinner's delusion: (1) That self-indulgence is the life of pleasure; (2) that sin will not be punished; (3) that a life of obedience is slavish and joyless. Many of the best texts of Scripture compel this mode of treatment. They are short, condensed, a great principle, or a single phrase of truth so stated that it cannot be verbally divided.

The freedom of the topical method is attractive to a fertile mind. The text suggests the theme, but other parts of Scripture are sought for proof or illustration, and so the truth may have a more thorough discussion and a broader view of Scripture obtained. And in its singleness it may be a better logical training of the mind and a stronger rhetorical form.

The danger of the topical method is inventiveness at the expense of Scripture authority,

that the preacher may think more of mental keenness than the mind of the Spirit.

The textual or expository sermon is one in which the text not only gives the theme, but the mode of treatment, the essential steps of the development. Is. xxxiii. 16–17, The Christian's privilege: (1) In position; (2) provision; (3) protection; (4) promise. The advantages of the textual method are easily seen. It seems the natural way. Many texts of Scripture are arranged in the best order for preaching. The words and phrases as they stand suggest the richest, strongest thought.

The method is scriptural, and leads to the careful exegesis of Scripture. As the surface view may be dry and commonplace, the preacher seeks to discover the deeper and spiritual relations of truth. And it helps to keep the sermon within the limits of Scripture and so to a more exact teaching.

It tends to instruct the people in the Scriptures and increase their reverence for the authority of the Word. There is a strong impression that the pulpit needs a revival of textual preaching, especially that fresh and attractive teaching of connected passages which is more strictly expository preaching.

The dangers of the textual method come from

careless, uncritical dealing with the Scripture. The surface view may be given in the place of the deeper, spiritual relation.

There may be an arbitrary and mechanical cutting up of the text, without regard to meaning or length. Such treatment belittles the pulpit in the eyes of intelligent men. It has received the merciless scorn of Mr. J. B. Gough in his caricature of a certain preacher in "Peculiar People." "My friends, my text this morning is The Little Bumble Bee. I propose to treat it in the following manner: (1) It is a *bee;* (2) it is a *bumble* bee; (3) it is a *little* bumble bee." In William Arnot's "Anchor of the Soul" is found a sermon from Ps. xlviii. 3 with the following plan: (1) God; (2) God is; (3) God is known; (4) God is known in her; (5) God is known in her palaces; (6) God is known in her palaces for a refuge. Nothing less than Dr. Arnot's rich life could pour a living word into such an artificial mould. And still another defect of the textual method is lack of unity, movement, and converging force, making the sermon a running comment or a series of disconnected talks rather than a single, harmonious, and effective growth.

A proper consideration of these two methods of sermon structure will lead to a variety in

preaching. One method should not be followed exclusively nor long at a time. The preacher will get into ruts, and the people soon tire of his unvarying method. He needs variety for his own mental training. And the utmost invention is demanded for the efficiency of the pulpit.

And such consideration will lead to a wise proportion in themes and treatment. Some audiences need more instruction that comes from textual sermons; and others, well taught already, need the stronger persuasion that flows from topical preaching. What is needed by all churches is consistent, symmetrical treatment of the Bible, and of method, a wise proportion of exposition, argument, illustration, and appeal.

And it should be said that sermons may combine both methods. Many are never clearly and purely one or the other. The analytic and synthetic should be used in every sermon. But especially the expository spirit should control the preacher. The preacher is the interpreter, and he fails unless he increasingly teaches the truths of the Bible.

The General Principle of Development. — Adaptation is the general law that should govern the development of the sermon. The method

should always be in harmony with the text and theme. A logical discussion of "I am the good Shepherd" as surely destroys the significance and charm of the truth, as picking a flower to pieces destroys its beauty and fragrance. While "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" might demand just such analysis. The audience must be considered as well as the text. And the gift and taste of the preacher will come in as well. While we are to keep out of ruts, cultivate the power of variety, we have the right to use what we can use the best. We must not be hampered by any unnatural method. No David is to be encased in Saul's armor. The logical mind will use logic, only let it be on fire with passion for the truth and love for men. The emotional and imaginative nature must speak through its own faculties, only let it have its firm base in truth, and its plan directed by the good of men. It is largely a question of utility.

This law of adaptation applies as well to the number of divisions. The sermon may have a dozen points; it may have but one. Henry Ward Beecher's first effective sermon was an accumulation of "You Knows" until forty had been reached.[1] It is better to develop one strong argument than discuss several weaker

[1] "Yale Lectures," p. 10.

ones. It is more difficult to do this, because it requires closer and more continuous reflection ; but the sermon is the better for it. A strong and fertile thought should be enlarged, held up in its fulness and splendor, not half covered up by the addition of inferior points. A good maxim for the preacher is "Amplify rather than multiply."

The Steps of Development. — Development may proceed by a series of propositions, explanations, observations, or examples and illustrations. And each one of these may be according to the parts of the theme or text.

Dr. Hitchcock's "Eternal Atonement" gives a good example of the development by propositions. "Who can forgive sins?" Mark ii. 7. (1) Whether God can forgive sins or not, it is certain that no other being can. (*a*) Man cannot forgive himself. (*b*) Man cannot forgive his neighbor. (2) Can God forgive? The reasons why God can forgive and the nature of this forgiveness.

Robertson's sermon on "Worldliness," 1 John ii. 15–17, is an example of development by explanations. (1) The nature of the forbidden world. Not the world of nature, men, occupation, but the world as controlled by wrong love,

lust. Hence attachment to the outward, transitory, unreal. (2) The reason for which the love of the world is forbidden. Incompatible with love of God, transitory, the permanence of Christian action.

Dr. William M. Taylor has an excellent observational development in "Elijah the Prophet," The vision of Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 12. (1) In God's government the quietest influence is often the most powerful. (2) The force of love is always greater than that of sternness. (3) The apparently insignificant is often the most important.

John x. 10 might fittingly be developed by a series of examples or illustrations: "Enlarged Manhood." (1) The Apostle John, the unlettered fisherman, becoming the spiritual leader and theologian. (2) Martin Luther, the humble monk, becoming the prophet and reformer. (3) John Newton, the slaver, becoming the Christian minister and hymnist. (4) Samuel Crowther, the slave boy, becoming the Bishop of the Niger. (5) The force that works the change and growth. A logical theme will naturally lead to a series of propositions, while a rhetorical theme admits of greater freedom in the form of development.

Should a single form of development be kept

through the sermon? There is, no doubt, a certain advantage in such harmony. Yet the preacher will often be led by the need of his audience to make one step a proposition, the next an illustration, and so on; it is solely a question of service.

The Special Laws of Development. — As to *substance*. Each division should have a *vital force*. The secondary and accidental should not be exalted to such a place in the sermon. Each point should be directly connected with the theme, and be a genuine demonstration and unfolding of it.

Each division should have a *distinct* character. It must not be a mere modification of some other head. It must not have elements that are found in other divisions. One point may grow out of another, but each one should be distinctly in advance.

The strict application of these two laws would save the pulpit from needless division and inferior argument. "Some sermons," says Dr. Shedd, "are good illustrations of the infinite divisibility of matter, but produce no conviction in the popular mind, because they employ the philosophical instead of the rhetorical mode of demonstration."

As to the *style*. Great pains should be taken with the form of the divisions. This is as important in its way as the wording of the theme. The points should be announced in the *concisest*, *clearest*, *briefest* words. No matter of explanation or development should be in their wording. Let such amplification of the point come after its statement, if need be. But the division itself should be given in a way of clear and striking impression. Dr. A. T. Pierson makes a plea for alliteration, parallelism, and other rhetorical devices for impressing the mind and aiding the memory. And he gives a good example under the theme, "Four Rules of Christian Living": (1) Admit, open the doors to truth; (2) submit, bow to the will of God; (3) commit, trust yourself to Christ; (4) transmit, convey truth and life to other souls.

Such manner would serve well as an occasional use, but might easily grow into an artificial habit. In style nothing can atone for the loss of naturalness and simplicity.

As to *the order*. There is no best or necessary order. In argument it will depend upon the nature and force of the proof. The matter will be further discussed under "argument." In other kinds of discussion the order will not be fixed, varying according to material and purpose.

In general, it may be said that the order should be *natural:* no sudden break from one point to another ; but in the order of simple suggestion and growth, and in the order of increasing impression. Order means climax.

The Transitions. — The perfect transition is one of thought and not of phrase. It is when the last sentence of the one division naturally leads to the statement of a second. "Well-cut stories are united without cement."

Commonly the transitions are made by words or sentences. Special care must be taken when a short paragraph is needed by way of transition.

The thought should be vitally related — a ligament, not a mere clasp. It should be interesting, yet subordinate to the division. It is easy to use an illustration or story so as to divert the mind from the line of thought. When the transition consists of words or phrases, we must avoid formality of constantly using the same words. Cultivate a natural variety.

The Announcement of Divisions. — Should they be *preannounced?* In some cases, when the thought is difficult. It will help the audience to follow the discussion. The danger is the loss of anticipation.

"Nothing we may safely say chills a congregation more than to be told beforehand all that awaits them. In nine cases out of ten, they will be more interested in looking for the end of the first point, and in trying to guess from the length of that what the length of the whole sermon will probably be, than in the matter of which the first division treats. They will be tempted mentally to tick off each point as it is finished and give place to the next in order. The interest of the congregation becomes centred in the wrong thing." [1]

Recapitulation is often better. It is more intelligible, more impressive, and more lasting.

It is a mistake to make too formal an announcement of divisions. Each point should be given in such simple and clear language, and by proper transitions, that every hearer will know it to be a step in advance. This can be done without calling attention to the fact. The statement of divisions should not be dams to interrupt the flow of discourse, rather doors opening into new treasures of truth.

You will notice that this discussion of development applies especially to logical themes. In general, the principles hold also in rhetorical themes. There should be an accumulation,

[1] Foxell, "Sermon and Preacher," p. 19.

step by step, of genuinely demonstrative material. It should acquire additional logical force, and produce a growing conviction in the mind of the hearer.

Effective Qualities in Development. — We should consider those elements that pertain to the development of the form into the living body, the qualities essential to the gaining of the end of the sermon. They belong to the structure even more than the style; to the whole sermon rather than to any particular part of it.

We all understand that sermons are to be growths and not manufactures; and that a growth, a living expression, however defective in form, is always to be preferred to perfection of form without this individual life. The question about the cup is not whether it is chased or of gold, but does it hold the water of life.

But there are structural channels of life, there are certain elements that belong to true sermons, that mark the life in them, and make that life more effective. And I mention three familiar elements, and pertaining to the special parts as well as the whole: *unity*, *order*, *movement*.

Unity is singleness of idea, not sameness of

idea. It does not come from mere contact of connected truths, and is consistent with great variety and even contrast of truths. Diverse and opposite truths may even enhance the effect of unity, if there is singleness of idea underlying all. It is born of diversity: one out of many.

This unity of the sermon comes from singleness of theme and singleness of aim. Singleness of theme is the beginning of it, and it is continued by singleness of aim. Every true sermon has some definite purpose to accomplish. What is the exact truth of the passage and why should I speak the truth lies back of every real sermon. The audience must be in mind as well as the truth, if unity is to be achieved. Definiteness of aim Dr. W. M. Taylor puts as the first quality of effective preaching. It is as necessary for preaching as for hunting. And furthermore, unity is the use of that only which develops the theme and accomplishes the object. Nothing is admitted into the sermon false to this; it is the test of illustration, argument, and lesson.

The conditions of unity will suggest some common violations. Needless explanation, whatever is not needed for the clearness of meaning, that calls the thought from the truth

to the meaning of words and the processes of language: exposition of a fact or doctrine, seemingly for its own sake, going beyond its application to present truth; and Scripture quotation beyond the exact point of likeness.

All digressions not turning again into the stream of thought and so adding to it are violations. As sameness of idea is not the essence of unity, the most deadening effect may be produced by no change of key. Moments of relief are necessary for heightened effect. All the great dramatists understand this principle, and it is quite as necessary in preaching with its themes of high thought. Then there may be seeming digressions that are journeys for new stores, adding at last to the value of the sermon. They are not chance digressions, thoughtless, but always for a purpose.

An illustration carried too far is a digression of thought. An earnest, intense purpose must control all such material. Thoughts may naturally grow out of the subject; but if they lead away from the direct purpose of the sermon, they give no help to it.

The advantage of unity is evident. It stimulates the inventive faculty of the preacher. Unity compels aim and so calls forth the best powers of the thinker. It secures definiteness

of impression. Want of it makes the sermon like a whirl of sparks, or like dead words strung down a dictionary. It tends to cumulative force; it is blow on blow, gathers momentum as it proceeds.

Order. — Heaven's first law is as truly the law of the sermon. Vinet goes so far as to say that there can be no discourse without it. Order is always a gain to the sermon.

It makes the sermon intelligible. Clearness of style is not enough to make the sermon understood; it must have proper arrangement. Order gives the sermon power. An arch of stones is stronger than a heap. A sermon without order may have certain power, the power of feeling or the broken power of its separate truths; but it is the power of a mob, not of an organized and disciplined troop.

Demands of order are, in the words of Horace, that "he just now say what ought just now to be said" — in other words, the material in its proper place. One thing at a time, distinct and complete in itself; at the same time the relation of things truly observed, so that the continuity of thought is kept.

Movement. — Movement is the very life of the sermon, that which bears the thought onward and the hearer with it.

It involves both continuity and progress. Movement is the genius of climax. No great effect can be produced without it; it characterizes all great speech.

The hindrances to movement are in the isolation and independence of ideas. Ideas come to the mind from different sources, of different kinds, for different purposes; and in this state they make movement impossible. They must be arranged and assimilated. Prolixity, undue expansion of ideas, is another hindrance. Revolving is not movement. We are to seize the salient points and not pursue ideas, illustrations, explanations, beyond the necessary use. Digressions compel a pause, divert attention, and so impede the movement. However instructive in themselves, they should be left aside.

There are some practical helps to movement. Begin with reserve. Do not touch the strongest element of the truth at once or voice the strongest feeling. Study the power of condensation. In description, give the distinctive features; in narration, learn the rapid passing from incident to incident; in argument, lay hold of the important points; in single sentences, avoid undue qualifications; in paragraphs, avoid undue expansion. De-

velop the points of the sermon in proportion to their importance. Do not spend too much time on introductory thoughts, and avoid the expansion of minor points.

True order will help to movement, the order of growing importance.

There is an advantage in continuous writing. The method of writing on different phases of the subject[1] and then putting them together, expecting a single living message to come from them, is a large faith in the consistent and unifying nature of thought. Dr. Samuel Johnson's maxim, "Write with fury and correct with phlegm," should have large use with the preacher. There is a concentration that quickens the mind, that gives an increased enthusiasm, a noble passion, as the mind dwells upon the truth, and as the desires go out to the men and women to be reached and helped by the Gospel message. The highest life of speech is gained by such concentration of the soul.

The practical suggestions of Dr. Magee, the late Archbishop of York, may fittingly close the discussion of development:

"The rule I always followed was never to have more than one idea in my sermon and arrange every sentence with a view to that.

[1] See Dr. Watson, "Cure of Souls," p. 26.

This is extremely difficult. I don't recollect succeeding in doing this more than three times.

"A good sermon should be like a wedge, all telling to a point; eloquence and manner are the hammer that send it home; but the *sine qua non* is the disposition of the parts, the shape. I am convinced this is the secret of sermon-making. I gave two years to the study of it." He speaks of preaching as the art of word-painting in the pulpit. In the pulpit, the word-painter is not showing a completed work, but is painting a picture in full view of those to whom he speaks, filling in the details before their eyes, and he necessarily aims at inducing the spectators to wait until he has finished. He must, therefore, in the first place, secure and keep the attention of his audience. He can only do this by making the backbone and skeleton firm and strong, and by a clear, logical connection between the various parts of the discourse. The secret of power in attracting attention lies in this: arrangement, *arrangement*, ARRANGEMENT.

He especially emphasizes the unity of idea, if one would be understood by a mixed congregation. "Stick to one idea. This insures its being better understood and better remembered. If when you have written your sermon,

you cannot give it a name, tear it up and begin a new one. Nothing must be allowed to overshadow this main idea; and the preacher need not be afraid of repetitions, but should endeavor to set the same idea before the mind in various ways and exhibit it in different forms of words."

LECTURE IX

THE CONCLUSION

OUTLINE

Application of truth discussed.

1. **Importance.** The moment of supreme impression. This implied in —
   a The very nature of oratory as a movement of thought.
   b Demanded by the purpose of preaching, persuasion to right living. Requires plan and discipline. The best of the man should speak. Habit of great speakers.

2. **The kinds of conclusion.**
   a No formal ending. The whole sermon practical. Truth left to make its own impression.
   b Recapitulation and résumé.
      1. Recapitulation. The points in the strongest order. When shall new language be used?
      2. Résumé. The sum of the whole in its greatest force and breadth.
   c Indirect appeals. Inferences or lessons. They may be a large part of the sermon.
      1. Legitimate. Not incidental, but from the heart of the sermon.
      2. Harmonious. Truths not self-conflicting.
      3. Practical. Not theory, but truth for life, addressed to the common mind and heart.
      4. Cumulative. One upon another in the same direction.
   d Direct appeals.
      1. Appropriate. Enforce the truth.
      2. Simple. Shall truth be applied in twofold directions? The best effect demands convergence on a single class or duty or motive.
   e Suggestions.
      1. Direct appeals to reason, conscience, will; indirect appeals to the emotions.
      2. The use of illustration in appeals.
      3. Practice an economy of exhortation.

3. **The general qualities of the conclusion.**
   a It must grow out of the sermon and be necessary to it.
   b It should be simple, strong, and generally brief. Here the heart speaks. Be natural and direct. Know when to stop. Leave the soul alone with God.

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Broadus. "Preparation and Delivery of the Sermon." pp. 230–240, 277–288.
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LECTURE IX

THE CONCLUSION

THE conclusion is that part of the sermon that applies the truth already treated in the discussion.

Its **importance**, then, is evident.

It is not a mere appendage of the discussion or a pleasant way of stopping. It is the crowning, burning, vital point of the sermon. The best of the man should speak then; it is the moment of supreme impression upon the souls of the audience.

This is implied in the very idea of oratory, as a movement of thought: the culmination of the thought, its strongest movement at the end. And it is furthermore demanded by the purpose of all preaching, persuasion to holy life. The elements of instruction will vary with the text and audience; but truth is never for its own sake, ever for the soul's sake, and instruction is the condition for moving the soul.

So we should put our best life into the last

words. And this requires planning and training. We must see the end from the beginning. We too often come to the end with flagging interest and wearied powers.

The Different Kinds of Conclusion. — The sermon may have no formal ending. The last point or division may be the end. The truth completed may be left to make its own impression. If the whole sermon or a large part of it has been about practical truth, and treated in a warm, sympathetic way, there may be no need of distinct application. Further words might only deaden impression. "I have always found that such preaching of others hath most commanded my heart which hath most illumined my head."[1]

Recapitulation of the argument or *résumé* of the discussion.

In recapitulation, care should be taken that the proof is put in its strongest order. It should have the form of climax, the most persuasive matter last. If such review is followed by a short appeal, then let the recapitulation be in the same language as in the body of the sermon. Otherwise new language might add force to the conclusion.

The résumé of the discussion should be put

[1] Whichcote.

in such a way as to give the sum of the whole, and in its greatest unity and force.

Indirect Appeals. — These are usually in the form of inferences or lessons. The proposition may be an admitted truth and the inferences the important part of the sermon. The body of the sermon may be upon a doctrine, or an event of history, and the inferences the practical lessons for men.

Such lessons should be *legitimate*, not incidental, but from the very heart and substance of the sermon, so that all will see and feel their force. They should be *harmonious*, and this will result if they come naturally from the truth of the sermon, for truth is not self-conflicting. They should be *intensely practical*, free from all theory and abstraction, making their address to the common mind and heart. The address has been made to the intellect in the discussion of the proposition, and now it is primarily aimed at conscience and will. And then they should be *cumulative*, one upon the other, each in the same direction if possible, the last the strongest of all.

The following plan is an example of an inferential conclusion.

Is. lx. 22, "The little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation."

The law of spiritual increase. (1) The

increase is from insignificant and despised beginnings. Developed from the history of the Church. (2) Why is the increase so great? Secret of the power of Christianity. (3) Conclusion by inferences. (*a*) The truth denounces despair in spiritual life. (*b*) It warns us against repression in the service of God. (*c*) Spiritual growth is from within, by the power of the inner life. (*d*) The promise of growth for the individual and for society.

The expository and biographical sermons of Dr. William M. Taylor usually have a full conclusion in the form of lessons, the practical part following the doctrinal or historical exposition. They illustrate both the strength and weakness of such conclusion. The practical lessons are rich and varied, but from the wide range of materials in the exposition the lessons often lack the power of unity and convergence. The shrapnel is not the effective form of public speech.

Direct Appeals. — Inferences are somewhat didactic. They reach the conscience and will, through further unfolding of the practical aspects of the truth.

Direct appeals, on the other hand, have little of the didactic; they are hortatory, and they require the highest skill.

Such appeal should be *appropriate*. It should

enforce the one proposition or lesson of the sermon. And this implies *unity* of impression. It should be *single*.

There is a temptation to multiply appeals, and to play upon the different motives of the heart, and to apply to different classes of men. We should remember that exhortation must be practised with economy; that men will not bear too much; that we have other sermons to preach, with perhaps years before us, and other lessons and appeals may be given in other sermons; that the best effect demands convergence — the whole force upon one motive or class or duty.

There are some truths that may be applied in the twofold direction to believers and unbelievers; but in general the truth admits of but one appeal of the strongest kind. Then it is unwise for the preacher to take the judgment seat and divide men into classes. His truth should be universal, for man as man. And each soul must be left to make its own appropriation.

Suggestions. — It must be noted here that direct appeals may be made to conscience, — the sense of ought and ought not, — but not to the emotions.

You never feel unless you have the reason

for feeling. You put your hand in the fire, and you have the feeling of pain. Let the light of a beautiful sunset come to the eye, and you have the sense of pleasure. The religious emotions are just as closely connected with the perception. If you wish to make men *feel*, you must in some way give them fuller vision.

"I hold that all emotion is based on intellectual conviction. Even your sense of natural beauty is so based. A man may have faith in what he does not understand, but he cannot have emotion in what he does not understand. Devotion must be the child of reflection; it may rise on wings, but they must be the wings of thought."[1]

We must make the most direct and pungent appeals to conscience. They cannot be too clear and strong. Duty is imperative — the duty of action. "He will never be a preacher," says Dr. Stalker, "who does not know how to get at the conscience. We are preaching to the fancy, to the imagination, to intellect, to feeling, to will, and no doubt all these must be preached to; but it is in the conscience that the battle is to be won or lost."

[1] Dr. George Matheson, "Studies of the Portrait of Christ."

It is unskilful work to attempt to move men by direct appeal to the emotions, as is the custom of many preachers. "A straightforward appeal to the intellect and conscience of men" is the rational method. The writer once studied the effect upon an audience of two addresses at the funeral of a young clergyman. The first was full of direct appeal, aiming at the feelings, dwelling on the pathetic incidents of the last sickness and of the relation of pastor and people. A few weak natures were moved by this sentimentalism, but the strong men plainly showed their indifference. The second speaker quietly and simply drew a portrait of character, and the new light subdued the mind, awakening the response of the nobler nature to the vision of noble character.

The best conclusion is often an illustration that puts the message in living light. Here is the power of illustration. It embodies the truth, sets it before the mind, and in that vividness the feelings are profoundly affected. Poetry may have the same power. It reaches the feelings through the imagination. Dr. Parkhurst closes three sermons (in two volumes) with long poems.

The appeal to the emotions must never be

for the sake of feeling, but for conviction and action. Feeling that does not move in the practical channel of duty is often destructive of the higher life. Communities that have been subject to certain types of emotional evangelism have been burnt over as by a forest fire. The elements of feeling have been wastefully exhausted, and a generation of patient tillage and waiting must pass before the soil will produce the growths of genuine religion.

The wise preacher will exhort as little as possible. The growth of intelligence will often render it needless and useless. He should always avoid the common use of the verbal signs of feeling, the purely mechanical forms of exhortation.

I have said that the direct appeal should be *appropriate* and *single*. "If the law has been preached, then let the conclusion be legal, damnatory, terrible," says Dr. Shedd. "If the Gospel has been preached, let the conclusion be winning, encouraging, and hopeful." Dr. Shedd's advice is not always best. While the appeal should be single in its effect, the effect is sometimes heightened by *contrast*. The truth of Luke xiii. 23–24 would not be served by an appeal in the same thought and tone as the body of the sermon. "The door

is narrow; the duty is imperative, strive ye; the risk is real, many shall fail." The noblest appeal is not in the same key, but in a sudden change of thought. "The city of God stands four square, three gates on a side. There is room for all."

The General Qualities of the Conclusion. — "Whatever be the form of the conclusion, it must be organically connected with the previous discussion. It must grow out of it and be necessary to it; it must strictly carry out and enforce the topic treated. It must be the same stream of thought, increased in volume and force, which at the beginning of the sermon was seen to flow from the text."

It should be *simple*, *strong*, and generally *brief*.

It is a place for the heart to speak, and feeling does not use ornate and elaborate style. It speaks in the simplest language. Witness the great dramatic scenes of literature, moments of intense interest and feeling, and see how short and simple the words.[1] High-sounding phrase, declamation, should never have place in the sermon; they are especially out of place in the conclusion.

[1] "Macbeth," II, 2; V, 1.

The language will be strong. While simple, the words will be vivid and energetic, short words, but pictorial words, and those connected with the deepest and strongest emotions.

And the conclusion will be brief.

The following satire on apologies in the conclusion is not out of place: "When the subject is fairly opened up, and a few of the younger and more impatient hearers are beginning to fidget with their hymn-books, you cleverly introduce some phrase which proves that the end is in sight. 'Now, brethren, the remaining points may be very briefly considered': 'Not to fatigue the attention of the congregation, let me pass on at once to the closing scenes of Balaam's history'; 'Time would fail to exhaust the wealth of this passage, so in closing let me throw out a few practical lessons from the subject.' These few practical lessons make a sermon in themselves. I am never weary of admiring the versatility of intellect which enables you to see so many lessons in a single text."[1]

I would not make a hobby of brevity. The application should be so given as to touch the various minds and conditions of the audience, and to this end something of fulness may be

[1] "The Clerical Life," p. 60.

demanded: the repetition of the same lesson in different light.

But not a word more than needed should be given. It is better to err on the side of brevity. The truth is hurt by needless exhortation. When the duty is properly enforced, the motive clearly displayed, leave the soul alone with its God. Any further words may destroy the impression already made. Happy the man who knows when to stop; who stops when he gets through.

It is said of McCheyne: "His rule was to set before his hearers a body of truth first, and then urge home the application. His exhortations flowed from his doctrine, and thus had both variety and power. Appeals to the careless come with power upon the back of some massy truth."

LECTURE X

EXPLANATION

OUTLINE

It has to do with text, facts, and ideas, as they may be used in any part of the sermon.

1. **The text: explanation by exposition.**
   - *a* The words may need explanation for clearness. Exegesis may put truths in new light.
   - *b* Familiar texts may gain fresh force and beauty.
   - *c* Explanation should be positive, and yet with no show of authority. Results rather than processes are demanded. Explanation should strengthen faith.

2. **Facts of character, nature, and history: explanation by narration and description.**
   - *a* Narration. In a sermon it should be more than a recital.
     1. Narration is a part of exegesis, when it gives the setting of events and characters.
     2. In the use of history and experience. The well-known fact in few lines. The unknown in details enough for vividness.
     3. Some sermons largely narrative. The secret of narrative is movement.
   - *b* Description.
     1. A part of exegesis, when the text is embedded in a scene or character. The land and the book are inseparable.
     2. It performs its most difficult and effective service in the analysis of character. Truth is seen in life. Description and narration must simply serve the truth.

3. **Ideas: explanation by definition.**

Texts and facts are to give ideas. Our work is to set forth ideas. Hence we must have them sharply defined.

- *a* Definition marks out the limit of the idea. It is analytic and aims to let us know. Judgment is synthetic and aims to make us appreciate.
- *b* Definitions are direct and indirect.
  1. Direct. Simple and combined. The simple presents nothing more nor less than is contained in the idea. The combined throws light upon the idea by comparison or antithesis.
  2. Indirect. Translates the idea into facts, so that we may relate or describe the idea. The oratorical form.

REFERENCES:

Broadus. "Preparation and Delivery of the Sermon." pp. 143, 157.

Pattison. "The Making of the Sermon." 14.

LECTURE X

EXPLANATION

The sermon thus far has been treated as a structure or growth, tracing it from its beginning in the text, through the different parts of its structural development. Incidentally much has been said about the materials of the sermon and the proper way to use them. It is well to fix the thought now upon the materials of the sermon — that which will make up the body of the discourse.

It may be thought that the materials should come first, and in the making of the sermon this will be the case. But the student can better judge of the materials of the sermon and their right use after he has in mind the idea of the sermon as a whole.

The materials of the sermon are explanation, argument, illustration, and persuasion. They are not wholly distinct elements. An illustration may have the force of explanation and

argument, and the element of persuasion may be generally pervasive. Yet for our purpose we may speak of these materials as distinct.

Explanation has to do with the *text*, *facts*, and *ideas* of the sermon.

Explanation may belong to the introduction of the sermon, but it is here used in a wider sense as belonging to the body of the sermon.

The Text: Explanation by Exposition. — The text may need explanation for clearness. It may have words not intelligible to the average audience, or that by long use have wrong senses attached to them. Going to the root of the word, showing its original meaning and coloring, may throw new light upon the Scripture and suggest the richest materials for sermons.

The text may be *familiar* and so make no proper impression upon the hearers. Then there is special need of an exegesis that shall give it fresh force and beauty, and give the truth in its original importance. Exegesis is not a dry matter; it ever aims like the work of the poet and all high art to get the first impressions of life, to put truth in the pictorial way. The conventional use of Matt. v. 8

makes it refer to a chaste heart; but a true explanation makes the pure heart to mean the singleness of purpose, equivalent to the "single eye" and "seeking first the Kingdom."

We must remember that the purpose of such explanation is not mere exegesis, but always controlled by the homiletic spirit for instruction and persuasion. So the explanation should be *positive*, never leaving a doubtful impression, not giving different theories, but that which study and judgment decides to be the best. The finished product should be brought to the sermon, not the chips of the workshop. We must do this in a simple manner with no show of authorities. "We must therefore take into the pulpit only so much of our exegetical work as is absolutely necessary to set the truth of the text in the strongest light. Results rather than processes of exegesis are all that is demanded."

At this point it is well to keep in mind the cautions of Dr. Broadus: Do not attempt to explain what is not assuredly true. Be sure of your exegesis. Do not attempt to explain what you do not understand. Do not attempt to explain what cannot be explained. Do not attempt to explain what does not need to be explained.

Explanation of facts, both of the inner and outer world, of character, and of nature and history.

This is of two kinds, — *narration* and *description*.

Narration in a sermon should be more than recital: rather the choice and use of only such incidents as will establish and illustrate the truth.

Narration is a part of exegesis when exegesis goes beyond the terminology of the text, and touches the setting of events and characters.

We must narrate whenever we use any incident of sacred or secular history or of common experience. If the fact is well known, give it in a few graphic lines; if unknown, spare no pains to make it vivid and lifelike.

Some texts call for a narrative treatment throughout. Such sermons, largely historical, are hard to lift out of monotony and make of living interest.

Dr. W. M. Taylor's serial sermons are good examples of the difficulty and excellence of the narrative. It requires his versatile mind, and rich scholarship, and deep earnestness, to give it life. The secret of narrative is movement. Here is all the difference between a dull and

racy story-teller. "Narration must be strictly kept to the truth which it is the design of the sermon to enforce. We must not narrate for the sake of so doing; however interesting a fact may be which is involved in the narration of an event, if it does not bear directly upon the preacher's object, it should be rejected."

Description. — Description, like narration, must often be used in exegesis. Truth is embedded in a natural scene or in a character; and the man who has the power to bring the scene before the eye, reproducing the characteristic features of Bible lands and persons, has the power of taking truth out of dead parchments and making it the voice of a living God. Preaching Christ is making Him live again before the eyes of men. The Land and the Book are inseparable. Ole Bull was once asked, "What made you a violinist?" — "The mountains of Norway," was the answer. The Land has colored the Book. And a minister does well to make himself familiar with the helps to the accurate and vivid understanding of the lands and peoples of the East. And in passing it should be said that whatever gives form and color to our ideas, cultivates the imagination, has the most practical bearing on the power of description. Here language may

approach nearest the representative work of painting and sculpture.

Take an example from Stanley's "History of the Eastern Church,"[1] the scene of Elijah at Horeb, for a union of accurate scholarship and pictorial power.

Description performs its most difficult and effective service in giving the effects of virtue or vice in the individual and in society. Truth must be seen in action. The description of character, of scenes, of actions as we find them in men, is the most powerful presentation of truth. It takes it entirely away from the abstract and gives it reality. The future is seen in the instant. The preacher must so present the secret motions of the heart that men shall recognize themselves; so picture the tendencies and inevitable outcome of life that the illusion of sin shall be broken. Dr. M. R. Vincent presents an example of such description in the sermon, "Does it Pay?" from "God and Bread" (p. 32). "There is a life going on in certain circles in this city which veils itself under social proprieties and elegancies, but which is aptly described by the term 'fast' — a continuous whirl of feasting and spectacles and carnivals, which is undermining some of

[1] Vol. II, p. 339.

the brightest youthful promise, and blighting some of the best young manhood and womanhood of this city. Do you know what the end of that will be? Some of you have seen Couture's great picture, 'The Decadence of the Romans,' in the gallery of the Luxembourg at Paris — a picture of a luxurious hall, where a frenzied orgie is at its height, a carnival of drunkenness and wantonness. A drunken youth, with a wreath in his tangled hair, sits upon a pedestal, while a reeling boy proffers a dripping goblet to the marble mouth of a statue. The old Roman dignity is gone from the brutalized faces of the revellers, which contrast sadly with the noble features of the statues of the old Roman worthies ranged round the hall, and with the sad faces of a group of thoughtful-looking men who are quitting the scene. And what is perhaps as significant as any other feature is, that the faces of this picture present a surprising likeness to faces which one sees every day in the streets of Paris, and that the models for this wreck of human nature are furnished by the painter's own city. It is a truth not told by Paris only. It has been told over and over again, as one city after another — Antioch, Corinth, Rome, Sybaris — has gone over the

precipice. It is the story of the inevitable end of fast life and of fast society. You buy a *dangerous* thing when you buy the world."

"Painting a scene for its own sake is the work of an artist rather than an orator. Description like narration must simply serve the truth; whenever it steps beyond this, it becomes a pulpit pest. Mere word-painting is out of place in the pulpit."

The spiritual character of the preacher as well as his artistic sense reveals itself in the work of narration and description. A lowly spirit alone will save a man from the vice of pictorial self-indulgence.

It will be readily seen that it is impossible to keep narration and description entirely separate. The elements will more or less mingle. Narration has more movement, and description more vividness.

Ideas: Explanation by Definition. — The facts and persons of the Bible are to give us ideas. And our great work as preachers is to set forth these ideas in their relations and applications. In order to do this we must have these ideas sharply defined in our own minds and then clearly define them to others. Hence the importance of definition in the sermon. A man's

success in proof will depend largely upon his clearness of definition. We often see this in popular discussions. If men would only define their terms, violent opponents would often find themselves near together. The audience will not see truth as we see it unless we define. The truths of religion cannot all be brought under human definition, but the difference as to the commonest doctrines of Christianity would be greatly lessened if men should attempt a clear and rational statement of the truth.

Definition, as the word indicates, marks out the limits of the idea. It does this to escape confusion with other, and often closely related, ideas, to make known the essential elements of the idea.

And here we ought to distinguish between a definition and a judgment. "Definition is analytic; judgment is synthetic. Definition decomposes an object; judgment composes or adds to the notion of an object that of some quality."[1] A judgment gives to an idea something not directly implied in it, and thus increases our knowledge. Definition aims to make us know; judgment to appreciate. "Faith is not conceiving of God as an idea, but it is laying hold of Him as a power and

[1] Vinet.

utilizing Him to the ends of holy living and Christian achieving," is a definition as it gives us a true idea of faith. "By faith we acquire a property in power that to our unfaith lies at an utter remove from us," is a judgment that increases our appreciation of the uses of faith.

Definitions are direct and indirect.

A direct definition is when the idea is expressed in terms of other ideas. It may be said to present nothing more nor less than what is contained in the idea. The definition is simple when it contains the single idea. "The world is human society ruled by sin." It is combined when the knowledge is gained by comparison with other ideas. "The world is neither the whole of humanity, nor the order of the creation, nor the tumult of society, but the sum of human evil."

The direct or abstract definition, an idea in the terms of ideas, is not vivid enough for many minds, and so the indirect must be used.

It translates the idea into facts, so that the idea may be related or described as we do facts. It gives to the idea concrete form. "Faith is the telescope of the soul." "Experience is the soil out of which all creed grows." Examples are the most effective definitions, as in the hero

roll of the ancient Church, the eleventh of Hebrews. The simple, direct definition must often be used and may be enough for thoughtful men ; but the more oratorical form is the indirect that throws light upon the idea by comparison or antithesis or example, using the common experience of men as a torch to light up the unknown and spiritual.

All effective preachers have the power of lucid definition. Sometimes a cumulation of definitions forms the strongest climax. Notice the following from a sermon of Dr. W. E. Channing :

"Sin is voluntary wrongdoing. Any gratification injurious to ourselves is sin. Any act injurious to our neighbors is sin. Indifference to our Creator is sin. The transgression of any command which this excellent Being and rightful Sovereign has given us, whether by conscience or revelation, is sin. So broad is this term. It is as extensive as duty. It is not some mysterious thing wrought into our souls at birth. It is not a theological subtilty. It is choosing and acting in opposition to our sense of right, to known obligation."

LECTURE XI

ARGUMENT

OUTLINE

1. Some truths must generally be assumed. God and the soul. Christ rarely reasons about them. We are to create a personal sense of God, to illustrate the Divine Nature.

2. Hence, the limit of argument. Truth is not always served by the formal processes of logic. The illustration, the explanation of Scripture, the analysis of personal experience may be better.

3. The positive uses of argument.
   - *a* To prove the truth. The reason demands truth, and Christianity recognizes the demand. We must not take facts and truths for granted that need proof. We should not fear investigation.
   - *b* To "multiply the brightness of truth." Argument for the instruction and growth of the Church.

4. The force of argument in starting from admitted truth. Primary and necessary convictions of the soul, well attested facts, matters of common experience — these the starting points. The preacher must start with the audience. The force of arguments from experience. Need of the inductive study of man.

5. The changed emphasis in argument. We must not put our truth upon insufficient basis. The sin of resting faith upon speculative theory.

6. Hints as to method.
   - *a* Reason may be pure and yet not convincing. We may prove too much and lose the sense of reality.
   - *b* Prefer the short road in argument. Reasoning may grow tedious and defeat its end.
   - c Prefer the effective argument.

7. Refutation.
   - *a* Positive teaching often the best refutation of error. Refutation should not be used without clear demand. Errors may often be met incidentally.
   - *b* We must not ignore refutation. It supplements the truth. We must be sincere. Sincerity demands: (1) The accurate statement of objections; (2) the meeting of objections with the sole desire for truth; (3) we are to seek to turn the objection into proof. Errors are often half-truths.

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LECTURE XI

ARGUMENT

It is not the purpose in this chapter to specify and explain the different kinds and forms of argument, but to touch the general principles of reasoning and suggest some practical points as to their use.

And in the start we must know that some truths — and those the greatest — must generally be assumed. God and the soul to some minds may be proved, but they pass beyond the reach of human lines of reason, and often the attempt to establish these fundamental facts gives the impression of uncertainty in minds that never doubted before. It is significant that Christ never reasons with His audiences about the soul. He simply speaks *to* the soul and the soul hears His voice.

And so about God. We are not to argue about God, but create a *personal sense* of God. "I doubt whether any man will ever be won from scepticism by having the existence of

God proved to him," says Beecher. "Our chief work in this direction will be to *illustrate* the Divine Nature. There is no use in demonstrating to men that there is music in one of Mozart's or Beethoven's symphonies. Play it, and I will defy them to get rid of saying that there is music in it. They recognize it at once." [1]

Hence the **limit of argument.**

It is a mistake to have reasoning the constant substance of the sermon. Truth is not always served by formal processes of logic. It is often best to hold up truth before the mind. The illustration, the explanation of Scripture, the analysis of personal experience, may do this so vividly that the soul may safely be left to its own reasoning.

Having suggested what argument cannot do, and is not to attempt, we come to the **positive uses of reasoning** in the sermon.

It is to prove *truth.* The reason of man demands proof, especially for truths and doctrines that make such absolute claim upon conduct. And the Bible everywhere recognizes the reasonableness of the demand. Reason is the basis of conviction: without conviction

[1] "Lectures," 3d series, p. 69.

there can be no call of duty. An appeal is worthless that has not back of it a solid body of admitted truth. We must often lay this foundation in argument.

In our sermons we often take certain facts of Scripture or truths derived from them for granted, when in the minds before us there may be uncertainty or even denial. And so all our processes are profitless. Every word beyond that which fails to carry conviction to the reason is but "breath in the wind." We must not be impatient with men or with these rational processes. It is a sin for the pulpit to neglect or do violence to the reason. We should be willing to reëxamine the foundations that to us are strong. The great facts of Scripture all demand proof, all welcome investigation. And argument can be made, not in the spirit of authority, compelling the mind, but in the spirit of sympathy, to enlighten; not in the spirit of uncertainty, but in the humble confidence of one whose feet had felt the foundation.

A second use of reasoning is to "multiply the brightness of truth." Faith needs to be enlightened; conviction deepened. "Many wise men have to spend their time in correcting the mistakes of other good men who are

not wise." It is not enough to show the probability of truth, but the fulness and glory of it.

And here argument, that would have no force for an unbelieving mind, may be used for the instruction of the Church further to establish in grace. The argument of Scripture, the testimony of history, the witness of Christian experience, the analogies of the natural world together, show the unity and many-sidedness of truth. It is the special distinction of Phillips Brooks that he exhibits the privilege and glory of the Christian life.

The force of all reasoning, whatever be its logical form, is in starting with some form of **admitted truth.** Primary and necessary convictions of the soul, well-attested facts, matters of common experience, these are the starting points. The preacher must put himself upon the same ground as his audience if he is ever to lift them to higher ground. It was said of Charles Kingsley that he tried to catch men by their leading ideas and insensibly led them to his leading idea, to bring the conscious life of God to them through the Gospel. He must start with them if he is to lead them into larger fields of truth. And he must not go too fast

for his hearers, must not get beyond the sight of their reason, or he will be compelled to make a lonely journey.

It will be well for us to draw a large part of our argument from experience — from the thorough study of human nature. We are to be pathologists of the soul. Next to the inductive study of the Bible, what is most needed by the pulpit is an inductive study of man. The ministers who refuse to live in speculative theories, but come close to the homes and haunts of men, who know what men are thinking about, who are used to their methods of reasoning, are the masters of a convincing logic. Mr. Beecher bears witness to the force of such reasoning : " When I had lived at Indianapolis the first year, I said, There was a reason why when the Apostles preached they succeeded, and I will find it out if it is to be found out. I took every single instance in the record, when I could find one of their sermons, and analyzed it and asked myself: What were the circumstances? Who were the people ? What did he do ? And I studied the sermons until I got this idea : that the Apostles were accustomed first to feel for a ground on which the people and they stood together ; a common ground where they could meet. Then they heaped up a large

number of the particulars of knowledge that belonged to everybody; and when they had got that knowledge which everybody would admit placed in a proper form before their minds, then they brought it to bear upon them with all their excited heart and feeling.

"Now, said I, I will make a sermon so: first, I sketched out the things we all know. You all know you are living in a world perishing under your feet. You all know that time is extremely uncertain; that you cannot tell whether you will live another month or week. You all know that your destiny, in the life that is to come, depends upon the character that you are forming in this life; and in that way I went on with my — You all knows. When I had got through that, I turned round and brought it to bear upon them with all my might; and there were seventeen men awakened under that sermon. I never felt so triumphant in my life. I cried all the way home. I said to myself, Now I know how to preach."[1]

The minister must remember that old arguments may lose their force, and new methods may be demanded, or at least a different placing of the **emphasis**. Our audiences may know

[1] "Lectures," 1st series, pp. 11–12.

little about Biblical criticism, but we cannot afford to be ignorant of its principles and conclusions and put our structure of truth upon an insufficient basis when we have the sure foundation in Jesus Christ. It is supreme folly for the preacher to place the authority of the Bible upon his theory of it. John Wesley allied the authority of the Bible with the truth of witchcraft. And an eminent modern preacher has declared that if Christ made wine, He was not a good man.

Our audiences may not know that Paley's watchspring is no longer sufficient argument; but we are not to live in the books of a century ago, and set up and knock down our knight of straw. For we may depend upon it that any theories of man and nature, God and duty, will work their way into the common thought of men, and color and affect all life, though men may never have heard of the philosophies that are their source.

"It is no longer possible to accredit the Christian revelation in bulk by the miracles, and to prove the miracles by a mere trial of the witnesses. Apologetics is confronted by a much more serious and difficult situation. The proof of the authenticity and credibility of the spiritual books has become a complicated, deli-

cate, and arduous task, testing all the resources of literary criticism. The centre of the historical evidence is shifted from the miracles to the person of Christ. The contents of the Christian revelation, instead of being the thing to be proved, have become an element in the proof. The ethnic religions can no longer be passed by with contempt; but their relation to Christianity and the distinguishing features of the latter as the religion of redemption through Christ must be clear. It does not meet the demand of the time to prove the truth of Christianity as a mere system of doctrine: what men need most to know is that it is the living, present, perennial power of God by which He is redeeming the sinful world."[1]

We may remember that the reasoning may be pure and yet not convincing. "Pure reasoning is the geometry of space." We may prove too much and lose the sense of reality. We are to trust the soul and not mere logic.

We are to prefer the short road in argument: not to argue but to convince. A long and unbroken course of reasoning may grow tedious and defeat its very end.

"You do not want an argument for the sake of an argument. You do not want a sermon

[1] Stearns, "The Evidence of Christian Experience," p. 17.

that is as perfect a machine as a machine can be, unless it *does* something. You want the people, and the shortest and surest way to get them is the best. When you are preaching a sermon that has been prepared with a great deal of care, and you are laying down the truth with forcible arguments, you will often find that you are losing your hold on the attention of your people by continuing in that direction. But coming to a fortunate point, strike out an illustration which arouses and interests them, leave the track of your argument, and never mind what becomes of your elaborate sermon, and you will see the heavy and uninterested eyes lighting up again. But, you say, that will make my sermon unsymmetrical. Well, were you called to preach for the salvation of sermons? Just follow the stream, and use the bait they are biting at, and take no heed of your sermon.

"You will find it almost impossible to carry forward the demonstration of a truth in one straight course and yet make it real to a general audience. You must vary your method constantly, and at the same time through it all you can carry the burden of your discourse so that it shall be made clear to the whole of your audience. An argument may as well go

forward by illustration as by abstract statement; sometimes it will go better." [1]

We are to prefer the popular argument — not to show our skill but to convince. "Eloquence is the power to make the primitive chords of the soul vibrate within us."

Refutation. — The sermon calls for positive proof, not mere negative refutation. Error is best refuted by teaching the truth. The entrance of light dispels the darkness. Refutation should not be used without a clear demand. Dr. Henson has told the story of his refutation of Mr. Tyndal's prayer test. At the end of the third sermon, a distinguished business man said to him, "Parson, do you know that many of the business men don't care a fig for the man Tyndal you are fighting."

Errors and objections may be met incidentally, without special and open reference to them. Among the things that Dr. Cuyler thanks God for is that he never preached against "Robert Elsmere."

The practical and speculative errors of the day were effectively met in the sermons of Canon Liddon, not by specific reference and refutation, but by the positive truths that stood

[1] Beecher, "Lectures," 1st series, p. 165.

over against them. The timeliness and method of discussion made the strength of the refutation.

Yet we cannot ignore refutation. It can often be used as a supplement to truth. We must adapt ourselves to the weaknesses of men. We shall often fail if we have no regard to the contradicter in the soul.

In refutation, above everything we should be *sincere*. The privilege that the minister has of speaking without immediate reply may be injurious. The effects are too often seen in carelessness and dogmatism. "Sire, I cannot go to hear a man who says whatever he pleases, and to whom no one has the liberty of replying," were the words of Prince de Vendôme to Louis XIV.

Free from open contradiction, we should treat ourselves with all the more rigor. We have all felt the partial statements in the pulpit, the appeals to popular prejudice.

What does sincerity demand? Sincerity means such a respect for the honesty of opponents, that we shall try to give an accurate statement of their views, treat their objections seriously, not with scorn, neither exaggerate nor underestimate, but speak as those who have a sympathetic understanding by trying

to put one's self for the moment in their place. Such a spirit of charity and fairness always commends the truth. It is the scientific spirit which should be more frequently followed by the pulpit. An English journalist has shown how the character of our Lord would fare if treated in the uncharitable fashion with which a preacher has dealt with a famous agnostic.

Sincerity demands that we meet objections solely in the spirit of truth-seeking, never in the zeal of party, eager for victory. We are to seek to turn the objection into proof, and the objectors into friends. We are familiar with the statement that errors are half-truths; at least in nearly all errors there are some germs of truth, and it is our duty to find these, to discover them to men, to strip the false from the true, and like Paul at Athens show men what they ignorantly worship.

Even though objections are wholly false and objectors hypocrites, it is far better to take their honesty for granted. Truth will thus gain a keener edge to pierce the heart of error.

"There is often a deeper connection between the orthodox theology and the unbelief of an age than a superficial view would suggest. Not infrequently the defects which are exaggerated

in the latter exist in a different form in the former, furnishing at least a partial justification for the heterodox protest.[1]

"I doubt much if mere opposition to the false is of any benefit. Convince a man by argument that the thing he has been taught is false, and you leave his house empty, swept, and garnished; but the expulsion of the falsehood is no protection against its reëntrance in another mask with seven worse than itself in its company.

"The right effort of the teacher is to give the positive, — to present as he may the vision of reality, — for the perception of which, and not for the discovery of falsehood, is man created. This will not only cast out the demon, but so people the house that he will not dare return. If a man might disprove all the untruths in creation, he would hardly be a hair's breadth nearer the end of his own making. It is better to hold honestly one fragment of truth in the midst of immeasurable error than to sit alone, if that were possible, in the midst of an absolute vision, clear as the hyaline, but only repellent of falsehood, not receptive of truth. It is the positive by which a man shall live. Truth is his life. The refusal of the false is

[1] Stearns, "Christian Experience," p. 19.

not the reception of the true. A man may deny himself into a spiritual lethargy, without denying one truth, simply by spending his strength for that which is not bread, until he has none left wherewith to search for the truth, which alone can feed him. Only when subjected to the positive does the negative find its true vocation."[1]

[1] George Macdonald, on Francis Quarles, in "England's Antiphon."

LECTURE XII

ILLUSTRATION

OUTLINE

1. Importance.
   - *a* The use of illustrations in preaching demanded by the mind. "Parables are more ancient than arguments."
   - *b* The history of language enforces it. Words are signs.
   - *c* Nature and human life rich in elements of illustration.
   - *d* The only way to reach the variety of natures and needs of a congregation. The necessary repetition can be kept from dulness by good illustration.
   - *e* The best preachers have been masters of illustration. Example of Chalmers, Guthrie, Spurgeon, Robertson, Bushnell, Beecher, Brooks.
2. The uses. Illustrations make truths clear, forcible, and attractive. They aid memory, cultivate ideality, and so strengthen the spiritual faculty.
3. Laws of use.
   - *a* Use them only when needed. They should be genuine illustrations, and not too many for the same truth.
   - *b* They should not be unduly prolonged, flashes of truth, not steady glow. At times the elaborate illustration useful, the details of the picture.
   - *c* They should be true to life, the result of careful observation, and drawn with accuracy and spirit. The use of illustrations of personal experience.
   - *d* We should avoid learned illustrations, and matters not well understood. Homely ones are often the best. Utility, not mere beauty, should be aimed at.
   - *e* Use variety, fitted to various minds. Examples and analogies for explanation rarely too many, but anecdotes and ornaments easily pall.
4. Sources.
   - *a* Shall handbooks of illustrations be used? Leads to bad habits and inferior illustrations, lacking the personal quality.
   - *b* Our study of the Bible, our general reading, science, history, biography, literature, especially the higher poetry, our daily life with men will furnish true illustrations. Child life and literature a fertile field.
   - *c* Cultivate the power of seeing. The experience of Beecher. The picture gospel of Christ.

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LECTURE XII

ILLUSTRATION

"IMAGINATION, no less than reason, is God's gift. It is the power by which dulness or baldness is avoided. Now imagination is lacking in some men; it is exuberant in others. If a man has no gift of imagination, he is just the man to cultivate it. If he says that he has not a particle of imagination, and that therefore there is nothing to cultivate, I venture to disbelieve him. He has only to recall his infant days, his delight in giant story or fairy tale, or his own day dreaming, and he will find that there is some germ of imagination in him. But should he fail, and find no interest in poetry, or parable, or romance, or allegory, or in the arts that shed a beauty upon life, he had better abandon all thought of standing up to speak in pulpit or on platform."[1]

Importance of Illustration. — The use of illustrations in preaching is in harmony with the

[1] Dr. Boyd-Carpenter, Bishop of Ripon, "Lectures on Preaching," p. 64.

laws of the human mind. Children love pictures, and men never outgrow that love. Truth is made known by object lessons. "Parables are more ancient than arguments." God has adapted His revelation to this constitution of the human mind. Redemptive truths have been spoken through redemptive acts. The teaching of our day, studying more closely the nature and the need of the child and the youth, is illustrative in its method. The mode by which we learn a new thing is by its being likened to something which we know already.

This truth is illustrated and enforced by the history of language. Words are signs of things. Notions are taught by objects. Words in their origin have this highly pictorial quality. Early literatures abound in the imaginative elements. But this brightness of words is gradually worn off by use, or in their stages of growth they pass away from the early associations. While the vocabulary is ever increasing, and new words start always from the object,[1] many words become commonplace, are not associated with definite objects, have no atmosphere of memory, and so touch no tender and sacred feelings.

It is the art of speech to recover the lost power of words, the pictorial quality. We aim

[1] See "bald" in Miss Murfree's stories.

at this in philology, in exegesis. We discover the word, we lay bare its foundations, covered up by the alluvial of the centuries. The power of poetry is that it sees and expresses truth in the realm of the imagination, gives objective form and color to its ideas, and so finds or renews the pictorial quality of words. The preacher and the poet have a common aim in the use of language, the use of such forms as are connected with the deepest sensibilities of our nature. Preaching has kinship with the fine arts, with painting and sculpture and poetry, in that it tries to represent truth, as far as language can do so, in living forms.

And the world of nature and man is rich in the elements of illustration. If we only have seeing eyes, we cannot help finding them. Truth has its correspondences everywhere. Nature is a parable of grace.

> "The meanest flower that blows
> Has some concord with humanity."

The best preachers have been masters of illustration. Every century brings its proof of this statement. It is enough to think of the effective men of recent years.

Chalmers, the philosopher and theologian, the intellectual leader, made every realm contribute

to his power over men ; especially did he make the heavens declare the glory of God.

Thomas Guthrie, the prince of illustrators, the Bunyan of the Scotch pulpit, delighted and helped equally the simple, untrained Highlander and the Scotch Athenian. Statesmen, philosophers, writers, were his rapt listeners. Lord Jeffrey said that there was but one step between his major premise and conclusion, and that an *illustration*. Guthrie's three "P's" are as proverbial as the three "R's," — proving, painting, persuading. The picture sometimes embraced them all.

Mr. Spurgeon's power of illustration is well known. He always feathered his arrows.

Alexander Maclaren is more of an expositor and a teacher of thinkers, so there is more explanation, definition, and reasoning in his sermons ; but they are also marked by the aptness and variety of the illustrations.

Frederick W. Robertson, the critical scholar, the subtle thinker, the acute analyzer of human motives, has the poet's gift and makes his truth bright and beautiful.

The pictorial element in American sermons varies with the man and the subject ; but our most effective preachers have recognized its need and its blessing.

Horace Bushnell does not fail to use the full and formal illustration, but he is even more marked in the use of pictorial words.

Henry Ward Beecher has been truly called the Shakspere of the American pulpit, not only from his wide knowledge of human life and his subtle analysis of human passions, but because of the fertility of his imagination, his wonderful pictures of truth, and his strong appeal to the feelings.

Bishop Phillips Brooks is not more noted for the breadth and variety of his thought than for the force and beauty of his illustrations.

I have tried to mention notable preachers here alone, — those of commanding masculine gifts, preachers to men; those farthest removed from one of the vices of the modern pulpit, *sentimentality*. And these men are all distinguished for their intellectuality, putting instruction first and making their appeal to feeling through the knowledge of the truth. Each one, however, is a master, each in his own way, of the art of illustration.

And what is true of these notable men is just as true of that large number of preachers who are blessed of God in making his truth vivid and real, and so move men to repentance and faith. There is more than a grain of

truth in Sydney Smith's witticism : that the sin of the pulpit against the Holy Ghost is dulness.

The Uses of Illustration. —They give *clearness*, *force*, and *splendor* to truth.

They are first to make truth *clear*. "Lord, send me learning enough that I may preach plain enough" was the prayer of an English bishop, that we may well take upon our lips. There are few minds in our audiences so well trained as to follow for any length of time a train of close reasoning, or to receive through the ear the proper conception of truth when expressed in any logical or abstract way. God has given His word a body. It is written so plain because its letters are those of life. And we are to make truth simple and concrete, so that men may see it and love it and feel its power. You have often seen the light come over the faces of an audience that has followed with some difficulty and possibly with indifferent interest some definition, or process of reasoning, when a fitting illustration has thrown its light through the whole process of thought. "Arguments," as Fuller said, "are the pillars of a discourse ; illustrations are the windows that let in the light." "One illustration is worth a thousand abstractions."

They are the windows of speech; through them truth shines, and ordinary minds fail to perceive truth clearly unless it is presented to them through this medium."

Illustrations give *force* to *truth*. They give greater distinctness to our ideas, form, and color, and so vividness. Vividness is an element of strength. The strongest words in the language are the pictorial words. They touch the sensibilities. We can feel strongly only as we see vividly.

Then they act in accordance with what Herbert Spencer calls the economy of style. The illustration, properly used, makes the truths so clear and pleasing, that no special effort of the mind is required to perceive the truth, and the untaxed power of the mind can be used to appreciate and apply it.

Illustrations often have the force of arguments. They may strike at once to a man's conscience without regard to logical form of argument.

Then illustrations give *splendor* to truth. It is not enough to make truth plain and reasonable; it must be made beautiful, attractive, even at times glorious. The true man will never use illustration for mere ornament; but ornament for the purpose of honoring the truth may serve the highest end.

The man who is always striving after the fine word, and thinking overmuch of style, must be lacking in moral earnestness. The world wants strength rather than mere beauty. But truth is beautiful. There is a beauty of holiness, and we are to liken truth to the most beautiful and noble things, and give it an honor in the eyes of men. We honor our Lord when we give a true splendor to His Word.

This effect is seen in the sermons of Phillips Brooks. Truth is presented in its manifold relations, in the divineness of its meaning and power. The Gospel is seen to be the most splendid thing in the world. The most heavenly motives are brought to bear upon the humblest duty, and not a fact or duty of life but is glorified by this heavenly light.

Too many sermons are plain in the sense of being dull and unattractive. You cannot long get a hearing unless you make your sermon bright. The true problem is to make it bright and spiritual.

In addition to these three chief uses of illustrations, it is true that they help the audience to remember the truth. The illustration is remembered when everything else for the time is forgotten. Dr. Edward Everett Hale testifies that his audience will not remember a sermon a year

old unless it have some telling illustration. But the picture will bring with it at last the lesson taught.

Then illustration stimulates the imagination, the ideality, the sense of beauty, and these are spiritual spheres: religion has everything to do with them. You must keep the sense of the ideal alive in your audience. The man who preaches without illustration, and so with little to touch the sensibilities, will teach but a formal and dead orthodoxy. That is preaching, and that alone is preaching, that makes God and the soul real — sensible.

F. W. Robertson of Brighton went to a club of workingmen, whom he could not get into his church, and spoke to them of the poets, knowing that if he could interest them with the beautiful and the heroic, he had broken the crust of worldly habit and opened the soul to the spiritual realm.

The Laws for the Use of Illustration. — Illustration should be used only when needed. They should be genuine illustrations, naturally rise from the subject, and never have the air of being forced and artificial. That which is perfectly clear cannot be helped by illustration. Style should aim at the realism of nature. One does not try to paint the rose.

Illustrations should not be unduly prolonged; they should be flashes of truth, not the steady glow. The power of condensation is felt especially in illustration. Even the genius of a Bunyan cannot always lift allegory into continued interest. Yet sometimes the elaborate illustration is useful, the picture given with careful and minute detail.

Illustrations should be true to life, the result of careful observation, and drawn with accuracy and spirit. Anecdotes are interesting as bits of life, but they must not be too often told, and they must have the marks of reality. Many of these war-worn veterans should be released from active service. But the trouble is that many of them are forced to do unauthorized duty. "What blights religious anecdotage and makes it an offence is its apparent unreality. Nine men out of ten, at the lowest, believe it an absolute invention — and very poor at that — and they can find internal evidence for their faith." Personal experience is often the most effective testimony to the truth; but it must be used with modest economy or it will express the person more than the truth. No man's experience is large enough to stand for the form of truth. "It is good to have one's message soaked in life, but humanity is wider than one's relatives."

Illustrations should not be crowded upon the same subject. Such use gives the impression of needless ornament and lack of substance, and detracts from the directness and earnestness of speech. "Not copiousness but selectness is power; not in the crowd of illustrations, but in the distinctness of one is power."

Learned illustrations and matters not well understood should be avoided. The meaning should flash at once and not need explanation. It must strike some common chord of knowledge or experience to be of use. It is a mistake to be afraid of the lowly and commonplace. Shun all cant about dignity of style. "Nothing is so dignified as a man in earnest."

It is important to use variety of illustrations, fitted to various minds. "You are going into parishes where there are old and young and middle-aged people, where there are working-men and men of leisure, dull men and sharp men, practised worldlings and spiritual and guileless men; in fact, all sorts of people. You are bound to see that everybody gets something every time. You will scarcely be able to do it in any other way than by illustration."[1]

Illustration should be used with directness. It is a mistake ever to apologize for them or to

[1] Beecher, 1st series, p. 164.

prepare an audience for them. Like humor, the virtue of illustration is often in its surprise. Be clean, accurate, and quick. "Make it sharp. Throw it out. Let it come better and better — the best at last, and then be done with it."

The Sources of Illustration. — The *Bible* is a rich storehouse of illustration for the preacher. As a truthful record of man's life, the special record of his religious experience, the treasured experiences of many centuries, no other source of illustration for the preacher can be so varied, apt, and telling. Phillips Brooks urges the greater use of the Old Testament for this purpose because the very antiquity of its history makes it timeless and passionless, and so its illustrations do not introduce side issues from its own life.

Nature is another fruitful field of illustration. More people to-day are interested in scientific study than in any other field of thought. How large the field of suggestion is shown by such writers as Henry Drummond and Dr. Hugh Macmillan. The latter uses the outward forms of nature as the former her forces and laws. However, we should guard against an absorbing interest in a single field of thought lest it narrow our illustrative teaching. A certain

Scotch preacher drew from his favorite study until a hearer exclaimed, "I canna bide his spiders."

History, and especially the history of the Church, should often be used by the pulpit to illumine and enforce the truth. It is not only illustrative but educative, giving to faith breadth and strength of perspective and courage from its continuity. The history of the modern world is far more useful than that of the ancient, because better known, for illustration loses its force in proportion to the demand for explanation. *Biography* throws the brightest light upon truth and missionary biography strengthens the faith of preacher and hearer. For young life to feed upon the heroic examples of modern missions is to save it from a round of littleness and weakness and spiritual dearth.

Literature, particularly the higher poetry, is for many minds the rich mine next to the Bible. It cultivates the imagination, gives the choice word, the word of pictorial power, the telling phrase, and direct illustrations of life. The poet, like the preacher, is the interpreter of nature and the soul of man.

And then *human nature*, the round of daily duties, the experiences of common men, are often the most effective illustrations, for they

are based upon familiar knowledge and give truth a practical power.

Shall we use handbooks of illustration? There may be a proper use of them at first, but it is likely to be a misuse. It is apt to lead to bad habits and inferior illustrations, lacking the personal quality. Such handbooks should never be our reliance—simply an open door into the habit of finding them ourselves. Dr. John Watson's satire on the crutches for lame ministers is well merited: "It is said that there are ingenious books which contain extracts — very familiar as a rule—on every religious subject, so that the minister, having finished his sermon on faith or hope, has only to take down this pepper-castor and flavor his somewhat bare sentences with literature. If this ignominious tale be founded on fact, and be not a scandal of the enemy, then the Protestant Church ought also to have its *index expurgatorius*, and its central authorities insert therein books which it is inexpedient for ministers to possess. In this class should be included 'The Garland of Quotations' and 'The Reservoir of Illustrations,' and it might be well if the chief of this important department should also give notice at fixed times that such and such anecdotes, having been worn threadbare, are now with-

drawn from circulation. The cost of this office would be cheerfully defrayed by the laity." [1]

The chief thing in getting illustrations is to cultivate the *power* of *seeing*. The seeing eye determines the vision. "What a dreary prospect you have here, Mr. Ruskin! Nothing but a flat country and waste water."—"Do you think so?" said the great prose poet. "When I look out, I always see the sky." It is the power of vision that we wish; and more than one preacher attributes the power to the study of John Ruskin. John Wesley required his young preachers to study Spenser's "Faerie Queene" for this power of illustration. Fiction is the vision of life, and poetry is the discipline of feeling and imagination. The men who see are the students of life, who have intense human interests, who are able to sympathize with the experiences of all sorts of men. "A man's study should be everywhere, — in the house, in the street, in the fields, and in the busy haunts of men."

The matter of such illustrations will be familiar to the audience and come often as personal revelations. Mr. Spurgeon often had strangers come to him and ask in penitence or anger how he knew the secrets of their life.

[1] "Cure of Souls," p. 50.

A well-known preacher makes a study of children's papers and magazines for his illustrations, and child life furnishes many pictures of the Kingdom of God. The method should be individual — the aim is one, so to quicken and train the imagination and the finer sensibilities that the messages of truth shall come from every side.

And this power can be gained by every consecrated spirit. Men differ here as elsewhere. But every man who is called to preach at all has the capacity of laying hold upon the innermost truth, grasping it firmly, and holding it up embodied to the mind. "While illustrations are as natural to me as breathing, I use fifty now to one in the early years of my ministry. I developed a tendency that was latent in me, and educated myself in that respect; and that, too, by study and practice, by hard thought, and by a great many trials, both with the pen, and extemporaneously by myself, when I was walking here and there. Whatever I have gained in that direction is largely the matter of education."[1]

[1] Beecher, "Yale Lectures," 1st series, p. 175.

LECTURE XIII

PERSUASION

OUTLINE

Persuasion may pertain to method and spirit more than to material, diffused through the sermon rather than taking definite form. Most successful when unrecognized.

1. Recognition of the spiritual nature of men. Their difficulties, knowledge, candor, desire for truth and goodness. Profound respect for the average man.
2. The Gospel is to be presented in its reasonable form, in harmony with the highest in man; Christianity the wisdom of God and perfection of human life.
3. The sermon is to be a message to *conscience*, so clear and strong and personal that the sense of ought will be aroused. The effect of brave, manly preaching.
4. The Gospel is persuasive. The simplicity and comprehensiveness of Christianity commend it to all races and ages. The variety of appeal. How far should the appeal to fear be used? The strength of the nobler motives.
5. Freedom from the *dogmatic spirit*. The difference between positiveness and dogmatism. The strength of understatement, of care and thoroughness, freedom from exaggeration and charity.
6. The personal elements of persuasion.
   - *a* Sympathy with men. Not satire but appreciation. The evil of scolding in the pulpit.
   - *b* Conviction of truth. Are we to preach truth beyond our experience?
   - *c* The relation of person and manner to persuasion.
   - *d* The power of enthusiasm.

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LECTURE XIII

PERSUASION

PERSUASION is a subtle, spiritual element; it has to do more with the temper and tone of the man than with what he says; it is essentially personal, coming from the contact of mind with mind, of spirit with spirit. Some men are antipathetic to you; they constantly antagonize and so rarely influence you, though they may speak the truth. And they may take this attitude toward a large part of their audience. The very sight of some men is a benediction. They are like the sunlight upon a landscape, making it beautiful and also fertile for any good seed that may be sown in its soil. "The very sound of that man's voice has a wonderful influence over me, though I should not understand a word that he said," was the testimony concerning such a man. But the truth itself and the way it is spoken all bear relation to the personality of the preacher and so have to do with the winning or repelling of men.

As the very idea of preaching is to speak truth so that it will persuade, it is well to think of some of the elements that enter into persuasion.

The persuasive preacher is one who recognizes the spiritual nature of man, believes in it, and tries to call it out. Christ at the well of Sychar is a good example for us. The way He dealt with the woman is an imperishable lesson. He did not despise her nor ignore her. He was free from disdain and superiority. He did not speak down to her; He did not condescend nor patronize. He believed too profoundly in her soul. He tried to awaken the spiritual thirst and then satisfy it. To this ignorant, superstitious, and degraded woman He spoke the sublimest truth of the Gospel as though it were hers by right as well as His. And it was the same spiritual vision and faith that a little after called the crowd of Samaritans "the fields white unto the harvest."

There must be a real knowledge of men, born of sympathy with them, the understanding of the difficulties of faith, intellectual and moral, and an invincible faith that through all doubts and denials, all temptations and failures, men have religious natures and have some desire to be

good men. Our knowledge of sins, the effort to convince men of their sins, will weaken our faith in them unless we are careful. The unresponsiveness of many men, their callous, hardened nature, our own failure to reach them, may cause us to lose all faith in them, and we often act as though they were beyond reach. Such a temper is fatal to persuasion. Men are never reached save by those who have faith that they can be.

"Almost all your sermons should be with the seekers in your eye. Preaching to them you shall preach to all. The indifferent shall be wakened into hope ; the scornful shall feel some sting of shame ; and before those who are most conscious of what God has done for them shall open up visions of what greater things he yet may do."

This faith in the spiritual capacity of men has its complement in the way the preacher looks at the Gospel and presents it. Where there is a want, there is that to satisfy the want. The Gospel stands to match the spiritual nature and need of man. And it must be presented in its fulness of supply and its adaptation to man's infinite variety. "Christ was made in accordance to the power of an endless

life," says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and it is in this spirit of divine adaptation to the wonderful nature of man that we must present the Gospel of the divine life. "No doctrine of the Christian faith is worth preserving which cannot be verified in daily life, and no doctrine will need to be defended when stated in human terms." Paul calls the doctrine of the cross the wisdom of God, and it must therefore satisfy the highest reason of man. And we may be sure that when we present the Gospel as Christ lived and taught it, the reason of men will give assent to it. The man who would persuade must remember that he cannot force the reason of men, and he may not long do violence to it. Faith and reason will not conflict. Only reason must be helped by the more spiritual faculties or instincts of the soul — faith, hope, love, obedience — into the full conception of the truth.

There is a way of presenting the Gospel as a scheme, a mechanical system, a hard and fast dogma; and there is a way of painting it as a life, — every truth to satisfy the nature and need of the soul, — a salvation not merely from the penalty of sin but into the fulness of life — God's way of making a man.

I do not mean that to be persuasive the

preacher must avoid the sterner aspects of truth and preach to the fancy and sentiment and ideal hopes of men. We must reach the conscience if we are to move men to serious and radical change of life. We must be too loyal to truth to modify it to suit the tastes of men. We must love men too well to keep the truth from them. We must say with Kingsley, "I will make myself all things to all men, but I will keep truth the same, eternal." And men love a sincere, fearless preacher. It appeals to the sense of right in them and is one of the most powerful means of training individual and social conscience. All the sanctions of right and the higher nature of men are on the side of such preaching. A brave sincerity never interfered with leadership, especially in one who is a shepherd of mankind in deed. It is only when the stern, sharp truth is spoken by a cold, selfish, dogmatic man that it shuts the hearts of men. Love must speak the word to conscience if it is to be a persuasive word. "Speaking the truth in love" is the way of the New Testament.

I do not believe that we can persuade to great and permanent issues unless we speak this fearless word to conscience. In the increased complexity of life, the growth of taste and culture,

the sense of sin is not easily awakened. Men of noble impulses and many beautiful sentiments cannot realize that they are lost without the Christ. The age needs to be taught the heinousness of sin. The first work of the Holy Spirit is to convince men of sin. "The greatest sin is insensibility to sin." The voice of conscience cannot be too clear and sharp.

If we present Christianity in its simplicity and comprehensiveness, our message will be persuasive. It is the Gospel for all peoples, and therefore the true evangel must have the catholic and universal note. We can persuade but a few men to follow our ism, we can lead the multitude to follow the Christ. It must be the simplicity of the Christ, not a partial and eccentric view set loose and incarnated, not human speculations concerning Him, not the refinements of human reason, but the Christ in relation to the whole man and to every man. If we can so learn Christ, if we can so present Him, men will be drawn to Him as He promised.

We are learning as never before the variety of ways that men come into the Christian life, the many gates to the spiritual nature, and the different motives that will appeal to men. The study of child nature, the emphasis in

recent years upon Christian experience, the growing recognition of the varieties of religious experience, all teach us that we must not make our particular experience or that of any class or movement as the test of all other men. We must go to the Gospel and present the many-sidedness of Christ if in the largest sense we would have a persuasive message.

It is said by a recent writer, Professor Coe, in the "Religion of a Mature Mind," that the sense of fear has largely gone from modern life, that men can no longer be driven by religious fears. It may be that the more spiritual conception of sin and punishment, the spiritual interpretation of the material pictures of punishment, account in part for this change. That it is hard for men to feel the force of spiritual truth — with the vanishing of the physical pictures the truth also has passed.

I feel sure that fear is a motive of life, that fear is in the words of Christ, that many dulled or thoughtless natures can never be roused save by pain or the fear of penalty. So that the preacher who fails to depict the results of sin, who presents only the beautiful sentiments and hopes of Christianity, is presenting a partial Gospel and not adapting his message to all natures. Yet fear at best is but the "alarm

bell"; it cannot be the prevailing note of the evangel; it must give place to the higher motives, if the awakened life is to have the Spirit of a Son of God. And there is more strength than men think in the nobler motives to arouse the soul, and they are the food for the development of the higher life. Christ meets the instinctive craving for God, He satisfies the deep sense of right, He answers the hunger for truth, He is the ideal of manhood, He awakens the purest and most ardent love, He sets before life the noblest aim and motive, and His service enlarges and enriches, gives the abundant life. Here lie the persuasive motives of the Gospel.

Preaching should be **positive** but not **dogmatic** if it is to be the persuasion of life.

The positive and the dogmatic are often considered identical, but they are to be carefully distinguished. They do not differ in the clearness and strength of conviction nor in the unmistakableness of teaching, but in the manner and the spirit.

The dogmatic aims at compelling assent to the form of truth: the positive is not indifferent to correct belief, but is anxious only for the obedience of life. The dogmatic is mandatory, the preacher taking the judgment seat and as-

suming for his words the power of life and death. The positive would refrain from all assertion of personal authority and lead men to act by the divineness of the doctrine. The dogmatic does not bear questioning, is tempted to the overbearing and uncharitable, lacks the grace of humility and sympathy with those who differ. The positive recognizes the limitation of human knowledge, the human element in all teaching, and that men of different minds may be equally lovers of truth. The dogmatic may make a stronger temporary appeal over ignorant minds; the positive grounds its persuasion upon reason and so leads to a rational and abiding life.

There is no little danger in the sense of message and in the zeal for souls, of careless overstatement of opinion and in the exaggeration of earnestness. It is all a sign of weakness and of superficial faith. "He that believeth shall not be in haste."

The pulpit gains by balance and moderation, by scholarly care, by the simplicity and sincerity that abhors rhetorical exaggeration, and by the tolerance that consists of "the love of truth and the love of man harmonized and included in the love of God." "Be more afraid of the littleness than of the largeness of life. Seek

with study and with prayer for the most clear and confident convictions; and when you have won them, hold them so largely and vitally that they shall be to you, not the walls which separate you from your brethren who have other convictions than yours, but the medium through which you enter into understanding of and sympathy with them; as the ocean, which was once the barrier between the nations, is now the highway for their never resting ships, and makes the whole world one."[1]

Throughout this discussion of persuasion, the personal qualities of the preacher have been implied; it is well in conclusion to fix special thought upon them.

If the "heart makes the theologian," it certainly makes the persuasive preacher. Mr. Great-Heart should always stand in the pulpit. To be known as a man of warm and tender sympathies is to turn the hearts of the people toward you. Many are burdened, weary, struggling, dispirited, and they crave the cheer of a brave and hopeful sympathy. Satire may have a small place in the sermon, but appreciation should be the constant element. "I live by admiration and appreciation" are the words

[1] Phillips Brooks, "Tolerance," p. 111.

of Dr. Alexander Whyte. Scolding is the evidence of a petty spirit, and the confession of weakness. Remember George Eliot's picture in Adam Bede: "Mr. Irwine was like a good meal of victuals, you were the better for him without thinking on it; and Mr. Ryde was like a dose of physic, he gripped you and worreted you, and after all he left you much the same."

To speak truth like truth and not like fiction is the law of convincing preaching. And this implies profound conviction of the truth of the message and its importance to the hearer. The conviction should be personal and not simply inherited or imposed. We cannot sincerely preach truth beyond our experience. "The authority of the preacher lies in his power to make other men see the God whom he has himself first seen."[1] Unless men believe that we have honestly thought out the truth, and tried to live it, they will have no final respect for our message. This may limit the range of preaching, but it will immeasurably increase its power. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" is the Scripture word for persuasion.

The preacher's appearance and manner in the pulpit have no little to do with persuasion.

[1] Lyman Abbott, "The Christian Ministry," p. 90.

Whatever will offend a pure taste in person and dress should be avoided. A restlessness, the lack of natural dignity and reverence, prejudices many minds against the preacher. Others are rendered critical by a lack of modesty and quiet reserve. Certain mannerisms of speech that seem to indicate a sense of conscious superiority, a high, shrill voice, a nasal tone, may seriously lessen the power of a message. The preacher strives to forget himself; but he has no right to forget what he is doing until natural and pleasing habits are formed. The smallest thing is to be lifted up into the great motive of the Kingdom. Kingsley's word is to be our motto, "Would that I were an Apollo for His sake!"

The highest element of persuasion is an enthusiasm for truth and humanity, born of God's spirit, as the Word indicates. A divine unction will often make men forget peculiarities of manner and even crudeness of speech. Nothing can take the place of the "baptism of fire." Without it the most perfect form is a lifeless husk.

"Many Christian ministers may have highest culture, and may write their sermons with much skill and thought — beautifully executed work like a Grecian marble statue. Alas! there

is no heart in it. Divine fire is needed to heat men's hearts. Those who depend very much upon their talents and knowledge are apt to forget to seek this much-needed divine fire for themselves as well as for their hearers. How cold such a heart must be to a congregation! It is fireless and lifeless." [1]

[1] "Diary of Joseph Neesima."

LECTURE XIV

PREACHING WITH MANUSCRIPT

OUTLINE

1. General suggestions.
   - *a* There is no best way for every man. Effectiveness is often independent of method. Life is before method.
   - *b* The relation of circumstances to method. The variety of audiences and conditions. By these method may be affected.
2. The advantages of the written sermon.
   - *a* Writing is a test of thought. It clarifies vision. It despises mere volubility and insures a worthy message.
   - *b* It leads to precision of language. Words are more truthful. We discuss specific themes and need accuracy. The tendency of the American pulpit to exaggeration. A man speaks well in proportion as he writes much.
   - *c* It leads to orderly development of the sermon. Important links are not omitted. Truth stands out in proper proportion.
   - *d* Thought provokes thought. To most men writing is an act of intense thinking, and so a richer sermon results.
   - *e* The use of the manuscript keeps the mind from nervous dread. Better physical condition for worship and the delivery of the sermon.
   - *f* The written sermon is preserved for future use. A sermon the expression of life. Writing alone keeps the subtle influence of mental and moral states, the atmosphere of the sermon. Not a plea for old sermons.
   - *g* The only method for many noble and useful men.
3. Disadvantages.
   - *a* The artistic element may overshadow the practical.
   - *b* The sermon cannot well be changed to meet sudden need.
   - *c* In delivery, the mind is not so quickened, not so open to influences. So the sermon may not be a living message.
   - *d* The delivery is not so natural.
4. The conditions of success.
   - *a* Careful preparation of the sermon. Not extemporaneous writing.
   - *b* Write as consecutively as possible, that the sermon may glow and pulse with life, and have the oral style.
   - *c* Study the manuscript. Be possessed with the message.
   - *d* Speak directly to men. Reading is not preaching. Preach through the manuscript.

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LECTURE XIV

PREACHING WITH MANUSCRIPT

THERE is endless discussion as to the best way of preaching, each method having its special advocates. The best that can be said is that the argument is probably true for the man who uses it. It cannot be too often repeated that preaching is a vital matter, the expression of personality, and consequently its power lies back of method. So it is well to preface the discussion of the various ways of preaching by some general suggestions that may place method in its true light.

General Suggestions. — In the first place, there is no best way for every man. Too much has been made of method. Effectiveness in the pulpit is largely independent of method. Men will lay down laws from their own success, forgetful of the variety of natures and conditions.

Dr. Buckley in a lecture on preaching has made a sweeping condemnation of memoriter

preaching, while Dr. W. M. Taylor practised that method for the first ten years of his ministry, and regrets that he ever gave it up. "If I might speak from my own experience, therefore, I would say, that memoriter preaching is the method which has the greatest advantages, with the fewest disadvantages."

Dr. Dale of Birmingham thinks that the overwhelming weight of the argument is on the side of extemporaneous preaching, while another keen critic says: "Some young men will never rise above mediocrity if they begin ministerial life with the idea that reading is not preaching. If a young man can do better with the manuscript than without it, let him not be deterred by the vulgar prejudice against writing, from taking his paper into his pulpit."

Men may be successful preachers in spite of method. Robertson, Spurgeon, Maclaren, Beecher, Storrs, are examples of freedom and power, while Chalmers, not a whit behind the others, read slavishly. Dr. Parkhurst reads with his eye on the page or the ceiling, and the ink hardly dry upon his paper, while Phillips Brooks used both methods, and was equally masterful over the minds of men in both. The truth is, success is always deeper than a mere method. It is in the man, in his

personality and his message. Method is at best only a channel, and power will use a common channel or make its own.

Then a particular method of preaching may depend upon circumstances. It may not only come from them, but should be adapted to them.

To a simple, untrained people, a paper in the pulpit may be an offence. Evangelistic preaching generally demands the directness of free speech. Large audiences are helpful to extemporaneous address, while small and thoughtful audiences make it difficult.

Dr. Storrs wrote and read for twenty-five years, when the burning of his church, the use of an opera house, and the change in the character of the audience compelled him to try the freer method, discovered his power, and made him the prince of extempore preachers. There are many who say, and probably with truth, that the quarter century of careful writing was the foundation for the later success.

We know that preaching is far more than the simple telling of the story of the cross. Such may be our work to simple groups or in strange lands. But a far harder task may be ours. Christianity has created the intellectual life, and the average audience in Christian

lands, needing the simplest truth of the Gospel, have also intellectual needs to be met, and cultured tastes to be satisfied. And the truth must be so spoken as to win the attention and respect, and win its way into all hearts.

So, while method is always secondary to manhood, it is worth study and personal adaptation as the best way of expressing the power of life and truth.

The Advantages of the Written Sermon. — Writing is a test of a man's thought. He may have what he thinks to be a wonderful vision of truth. It seems even the more wonderful because shadowy, as in a fog the outline of objects is magnified. All preachers have had such experiences. Now writing helps to clarify vision. The pen is a dispeller of false charms. If the visions are real, though shadowy, the process of thinking them out and putting them down on paper in the best way brings them out of all dimness into clear and definite form. And if the visions are but shadows, they vanish, and the man knows his poverty and sets to work to get genuine material. So writing leads to serious thinking. It is a promoter of a studious life. It tends to give a man a high ideal of thorough-

ness. He learns to despise mere volubility ; to escape the snare of eloquence ; to weigh his thoughts, and feel the moral quality of his words.

Writing is a method that on the whole insures a worthy message. The very fact of a manuscript is apt to give the people that assurance, while there is an instinctive suspicion of the man without the manuscript until the people know his character and intellectual habits.

There is no special spiritual virtue in extemporaneousness, either in preaching or worship. The Holy Spirit is as truly in the study as in the pulpit. It is only fanaticism that makes the sweeping application and a false interpretation of the text, "Take no heed what ye shall say." Writing is not a lack of faith. It may be the highest honor we can pay the Spirit and the Word.

Writing leads to *precision* of *language*. "Writing maketh an exact man" is the familiar word of Lord Bacon. "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words" is the fine description of the Bible. Think of the power of a word, the moral quality of words. They are the living pulses of the soul. Through the spoken word we are to pour life into the lives

of the hearers. Words to be truthful, to convey the reality, should give the exact measure, spirit, and life of the message. How are we to use such words? It is an accepted maxim that there is a relation between style and thought. "Style is the man." Exact thinking must be back of exact speech. A clear, forceful message will seek such a channel of expression. It will despise dim and nerveless speech. But the difficulty is great here. Will not writing be the best means of securing exactness; precision of style?

Words may mean so many different things according to the training and associations of men. How shall words convey the same impression to the hearer that they have in the mind of the preacher?

The preacher is discussing specific themes: those that require scientific accuracy. There is too much haziness in the mind about the simplest truths of the Gospel. And for this the diffuse, careless speech of the pulpit is often responsible.

Careless, inexact, foolish words are spoken by the extemporaneous speaker. There is great danger of misunderstanding. Every man has had this experience of being understood in the very sense he did not mean. This fact

alone has made some men so sensitive that they will not suffer themselves to speak without careful writing. And who has not had painful moments over lapses of speech, broken expression, and foolish words struck off like sparks from the anvil in the heat of the moment! The special fault of the American pulpit is *exaggeration*. We have not learned the element of simplicity, — "much within and little without." We are not willing to let truth have its exact measure; we make her go on stilts. "Some of our gaudy bindings must be as distasteful to them as some of their gigantic utterances are to us" is the criticism of a writer in the *Expository Times*.

In writing the best word can be chosen, and the order can be secured that makes truth clear and strong. There is deliberation, thoughtfulness; defect can be remedied. The preacher can look with critical eye at his own work.

All thoughtful men realize the advantages of writing. Write much is the constant advice, whatever be the method of preaching. Robertson wrote the sermon over the Monday after he had preached it. Spurgeon corrected the reporter's notes. Beecher constantly wrote for the press.

"I could lay it down as a rule admitting of

no exception," said Lord Brougham in his Inaugural Address at Glasgow University, "that a man will speak well in proportion as he has written much, and that with equal talents he will be the finest extempore speaker, when no time for preparing is allowed, who has prepared himself most sedulously when he had an opportunity of delivering a premeditated speech."

The practical question is, How shall the young minister, with the pressing demands of pulpit and parish, get the time to write, unless he writes on his sermons? In nine cases out of ten the average man will wholly neglect writing, and fall into diffuse, inexact, unprogressive speech, unless he writes somewhat for the pulpit.

Writing leads to orderly development of the sermon. Important links are not omitted. The steps of thought are made in proper order. Care can be taken with the transitions of thought — often the finest and most difficult parts of the sermon — that act both as rests to the mind and as the bands of thought.

And the truth can so be made to stand before the mind in its proper proportion. Sermons may be true, but malformed — certain parts out of proportion to the rest, as though the map of the country should be drawn with New York on a scale five times larger than that

of other states. Symmetry of creation is necessary for symmetry of impression. The imagination should conceive the whole, and then the writing make good each separate part.

Thought provokes thought. In careful writing there is time to think. In spite of all theories more thought is used. And by thinking, by the effort of careful expression, other thought is started not in the mind at first. As in long, intent looking upon any object, many things are found not at first seen, so in the study of truth as we write. To most men the act of writing is this intense looking. And so a richer, fuller sermon results.

The use of the manuscript keeps the mind from nervous dread. The man goes to the pulpit in better physical condition, can give himself unreservedly to the proper delivery of the sermon, and is not so anxious and prepossessed as to have no strength for the proper expression of the parts of worship.

John Angell James said to a friend that he should read his sermon before the London Missionary Society. The friend remonstrated. "Why shouldn't I read?" — "Because you are never so effective when you read." — "Well, now, I'll tell you how it is. If I preach without reading, I shall be miserable for three weeks—

miserable till I am in the pulpit; if I read, I shall be quite happy till I begin to preach, though I shall be miserable till I finish."

Then the written sermon can be preserved and used again if need be. There are certain moral and intellectual experiences that give to a particular sermon its power. You pass out from the experience to others, in the progress of your life. But the truth that you then found and felt as a fresh discovery is an old truth, and needs to be presented again. That particular truth may not present itself with the same peculiar power again. Now the written sermon preserves something of the atmosphere of the truth. The experience is in a certain sense fixed, and so can be made vivid to an audience again.

It is not a plea for old sermons. The man who begins to live on the past has begun to decline. It is not the plea for the lazy man. But a man can preach an old sermon without the charge of laziness. It is almost impossible to reproduce an extemporaneous sermon. The subtle influence of life has gone from it.

The last and perhaps the strongest reason for the written sermon is that many noble and useful men without the manuscript would never be able to preach at all.

The advantages of the written sermon taken alone might give an exaggerated view of this method of preaching. The needed correction will be found in considering the disadvantages.

Disadvantages. — The artistic element may easily be superior to the practical: this both in the form of the sermon and in the language chosen.

"The scholastic subtleties, which the theologian in his study can hardly avoid," may creep into the sermon. The sermon may be regarded as a form of truth and not solely an instrument of service.

In the quiet of the study, away from the needs of men, it is easy to gratify one's artistic sense and forget the speech that will convey the most of message and sympathy. The written sermon may minister to a class and not to the people.

The written sermon is fixed and cannot be easily changed to meet the present need of the audience. Any sudden response from the audience, any change in the message through the quickened thought of the preacher, cannot easily find a place in the sermon. If the new suggestion is expressed, the extemporaneous speech may be a jar that breaks more than

quickens the thought. McCheyne's habit of leaving the conclusion to the freedom and impulse of the moment is the exception and not the law of effective speech.

Furthermore, the mind intent on giving the written message is not so sensitive to the presence and needs of men, — the reflex influence of the audience is very small. The mind is not so active and alert, it follows the prepared course of thought, it is not quickened by attention and the effort to put thought into the best words, and so is not so open to the messages of the Spirit. And the sermon may not be felt as a present and living message, a word from the heart of the preacher to the hearts of men.

Then the delivery may be affected by the reading of the sermon. The eye on the paper, often the slight stooping to catch the meaning of a line, is not the natural position of speaking. The voice is injured from the cramped position of the vocal organs. It has a too regular tone and movement, lacking the spontaneity and flexibleness of face to face speech. The reader of sermons is more often an unnatural speaker.

But the disadvantages of the written sermon should be no obstacle to the man who decides

upon this method as the best. They can all be made spurs to success.

The Conditions of Success. — Writing does not inevitably insure the best thought and the best expression of thought. There may be a kind of extemporaneous writing, with all the faults of unpremeditated speech. Careless writing is as bad as careless speaking. Only careful writing, with rigorous criticism, has the promise of success.

It is a gain to write as rapidly and consecutively as possible, that the sermon may glow and pulse with life and have the oral style. It would give clearness, directness, and vigor to the sermon if it could be thought out before pen were put to paper. Men often spend too much time on their sermons; they lack the concentration of thought as they write; they do not compel the mind to do its work, and so the sermon lacks direction and movement: it has a nerveless quality, a patchwork effect.

The manuscript should be thoroughly studied with the eye to inflection and emphasis and action, how the thought may be the most vocal. The man should be possessed with the message, by meditation and prayer work himself into the life of the thought again, as when it came first

as a glad surprise or was attained as a painful discipline. He should be so familiar with it all that in the moment of action he never need to think how he is speaking.

And finally we should speak in a natural voice and manner directly to men, gaining the power of glancing at the page, and keeping the eye on the audience. There is a difference between ordinary reading and speaking, but it should not hold in preaching. Preaching is speaking. Reading is not preaching. The manuscript must not be a nonconductor. It is possible to preach so that the audience will forget the paper.

LECTURE XV

EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING

OUTLINE

"He knows what he is going to say, but does not know how he will say it." The whole man ought to speak. If the paper is a nonconductor, then it should be laid aside. A matter of temperament, opportunity, and training.

1. The advantages.
   - *a* It is regarded as the ideal method. When well done, it is the best. "He who can speak is a man."
   - *b* The audience checks the mere intellectual development of the truth. The sermon becomes practical.
   - *c* It helps to proper repetition, illustration, and expansion of truth.
   - *d* The delivery has the personal quality.
   - *e* The freedom, swiftness, versatility of a quickened nature.
   - *f* Many occasions demand extemporaneous preaching.
   - *g* The ease and fruitfulness of the method. The facility in the preparation of sermons; the time saved for wider study.
2. The disadvantages. Hasty, superficial preparation, inaccurate speech, wrong proportion. "A grain of thought to a bushel of words."
3. The conditions of success.
   - *a* A sound and disciplined body; all vital energies in easy and healthful play.
   - *b* Mastery of mental and vocal powers.
   - *c* Hard and constant study of the materials of sermons.
   - *d* A clear and full outline.
   - *e* Language from the moment. Anxiety about ideas, not words. Yet the writing of critical parts. The habit of John Bright.
   - *f* A constant student of style. English a lifelong discipline.
4. Other methods.
   - *a* Memoriter.
   - *b* Free speaking after writing.
   - *c* Suggestions as to personal method.

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LECTURE XV

EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING

We must not be partisan in our views of the best way of preaching, nor decide our own method from a superficial view of preaching or a hasty judgment of our own powers. We must look at all sides of the question with the scientific spirit, — what others have done with success, what are the special needs of the pulpit to-day, and what we can do the best, judged by an honest self-look and thorough trial.

"He knows what he is going to say, but does not know how he will say it," is an excellent definition of extemporaneous preaching. It supposes most thorough study and mastery of the materials of the sermon; even the exact order of their use, and then entire freedom in the expression of the truth.

A man ought to *speak*, if he preaches, whatever method he may use. If preaching is God's word through a man, then the whole man ought to speak. If the personality is the freest and fullest, most vital, when it speaks through a

paper, then let the man read. But if the paper is a nonconductor, if he cannot bring his entire personality to bear upon men, then the manuscript ought to be thrown aside. No man has a right to be a slave to a false method. He must be in free communion with his audience and receive from them, as well as give to them.

"Shall I write my sermons, or shall I extemporize? is the ever open question. That depends to a very considerable extent upon a man's temperament. If he be extremely sensitive and fastidious by nature, and, withal, somewhat secretive and cautious, it would frequently be almost impossible for him to extemporize with fluency. Sometimes men are so oppressed under the influence of an audience that they cannot possibly think in its presence.

"On the other hand, men of fruitfulness in thought, of ardor in feeling, courageous men, who are helped by a sense of difficulty and danger, will be roused by the necessity of exertion and find their best powers of eloquence developed by their face-to-face dealing with an audience."[1]

What, then, are the advantages of the extemporaneous method?

[1] Beecher, "Yale Lectures."

Advantages. — When well done it is generally regarded as the best. In all spheres of public speech it has been regarded as the ideal method. "He who can speak is a man," said Luther. "How can you expect your hearers to remember what, but for your book, you are afraid you should yourself forget?" says Cotton Mather. A keen frontiersman said admiringly of Bishop Mead of the Protestant Episcopal Church that "he was the first one of those petticoated fellows he had ever seen who could shoot without a rest." Even the desire of a cultivated audience for finish and beauty of form is soon forgotten in the grasp of the man who speaks right on with simple and fervid directness.

The man is checked by the audience from the mere intellectual development of the truth. The personal taste gives place to the personal need of the people. Not the unfolding of truth from within, not the symmetrical work of thought; but thought and form tested and judged by its practical uses of instruction and help.

In the study, the student is apt to be master. Without knowing it, the minister may pursue a course of thought that seems to himself of the highest interest and value, and when written it will be preached just as prepared.

But when spoken extempore, the preacher can judge of the interest of the audience. An indifferent look, a nodding head, will be a sharp indicator of its appropriateness. And the thought of the sermon may be changed to meet the unconscious demand of men.

Akin to this is the knowledge one gets from an audience in extempore speech of repetition, illustration, and expansion of truth. A true speaker is sensitive. This very capacity of keen sensitiveness is an element of effectiveness. His own feeling will be a perfect barometer of the condition of the faces before him. Shall he illustrate this truth rather than continue a course of reasoning? His audience will tell him. Shall he expand this point, and repeat this truth in other forms, with other relations, so that every mind before him shall understand? The audience will tell him. His eye is upon them; and the response in their faces will tell him how to make truth effective.

The written sermon is apt to be concise, to avoid repetition: the tendency to conciseness at the expense of clearness. But the tendency of the extempore speaker is to be diffuse. And a certain amplification — more than we generally give — is necessary for the popular mind.

Lawyers understand the use of repetition, and do not hesitate to repeat until every juryman is impressed. "We often see," says a modern preacher, "as we go on in our discourse, from the straining attention of some in the crowd, that we have not yet succeeded in what we have spoken. Are we, then, to go forward, without making another attempt with some change of address or variety of image?" Here the extempore preacher has the advantage for more freedom.

Dr. Johnson said to Boswell: "This, sir, you must enlarge on; you must not argue there as if to the schools. You must say the same thing over and over again in different words. If you say it but once, they miss it in a moment of inattention."

Pitt expressed the same thought, "Every person who addressed a public assembly, and was anxious to make an impression upon particular points, must either be copious upon some points or else repeat them, and copiousness is to be preferred to repetition." Here is the reason that a sermon, good to hear, is not always good to read. Lord Brougham saw this: "The orator often feels that he could add strength to his composition by compression; but his hearers would then be unwilling to

keep pace with him, and he is compelled to sacrifice conciseness to clearness."

A judge of the Supreme Court once said to Charles G. Finney: "Ministers do not exercise good sense in addressing the people. They are afraid of repetition. They use language not well understood by the common people. Their illustrations are not taken from the common pursuits of life. They write in too elevated a style, and read without repetition, and are not understood by the people. Now, if lawyers should take such a course, they would ruin themselves and their cause. When I was at the bar, I used to take it for granted, when I had before me a jury of respectable men, that I should have to repeat over my main positions about as many times as there were persons in the jury-box. I learned that unless I did so, illustrated and repeated and turned the main points over, — the main points of law and evidence, — I should lose my cause. Now, if ministers would do this, the effects of their preaching would be unspeakably different from what they are."

And quaint Andrew Fuller has the final word, "Without a fair proportion of chaff the horse is apt to bolt his oats."

The style gains ease, directness, and vigor.

It loses in precision and beauty, but gains in the best elements of conversation. Wendell Phillips has called oratory "animated conversation." Dr. Hitchcock's style must be read. No mind could produce continuously such keen, accurate, pictorial speech. It only grows with the pen.

The delivery has the personal quality. The eye finds the eye of the hearer. The face speaks with the message. The tones of the voice, the action of the body, all partake more of the personal quality : a word to men.

The sermon is felt to be not a discussion about truth, but the voice of truth itself. The audience are held and moved by the outpouring of a life. So the *whole man* will speak, as rarely in the written sermon.

There are certain states of mind of transcendent importance to the extempore speaker. He is quickened by his audience. He perceives the minute and subtle changes and influences from them. He is determined on mastery. He feels the importance of the truth. And he throws his whole manhood upon the audience. At times the sermon may gain the highest elements possible for public speech, — a freedom, swiftness, versatility, and spiritual rush.

Then some occasions demand extempore speaking, such as the prayer meeting, the

funeral service, public conference, moments of great religious interest. The minister who cannot lay aside his manuscript at such times is greatly hampered.

And finally, here is ease and fruitfulness of method. It saves time for gathering materials. The habit is formed of finding sermons everywhere. The trained mind quickly shapes the materials into form, and the occasion brings the oral expression. No long hours of writing are demanded. And the time is gained for systematic study of the Bible, and acquaintance with the thought of the world: and so the pulpit never runs dry, the sermons never lack in variety and fulness.

The genius of a Spurgeon or a Beecher would never have given the world the riches of thought had writing been the method of preparation.

"We do not desire to have preaching made less thorough or less instructive, but it is desirable that it should be less burdensome. Many and many a minister is a prisoner all the week to his two sermons. In them he has poured his whole life, and when they are done there is little of him left for pastoral labors and social life. Few men there are who are upborne and carried forward by their sermons. Few men

ascend, as the prophet did, in a chariot of fire. The majority of preachers are consciously harnessed, and draw heavily and long at the sermon, which tugs behind them. In every way, then, it is desirable that preaching should be made more easy, that men should learn to take advantage of their own temperament, and that they should learn the best plans and methods." [1]

Disadvantages. — The chief disadvantages are implied in the excellence of the written sermon, and need often to be stated as warning signals. Hasty, superficial preparation, inaccurate speech, wrong proportion: such sermons are like Gratiano's reasons — a grain of thought to a bushel of words. It is said of Lacordaire that even he with his wonderful powers did not altogether escape the perils of the extempore preacher: "Sometimes too emphatic, sometimes too declamatory; logic sometimes weak and confused, he rarely achieved the perfect beauty which comes from perfect simplicity."

The Conditions of Success. — The faults of extemporaneous speaking are so common that they have prejudiced thoughtful men against

[1] Beecher, Vol. I, p. 211.

the method. But the faults are not necessary. And many a man, who is now a poor reader of sermons, if he had Disraeli's spirit of "I will be heard," might become an effective face to face preacher. The conditions of success can be met by a consecrated will.

Such speaking demands a sound and disciplined body, all the vital energies in easy and healthful play. A small and frail body is almost a fatal handicap. It has become a proverb that the orator must have a good stomach. Health or disease sounds in the tones of the voice. Robust health is to be desired for what Beecher so well calls the "thrust power of the voice." Nowhere more than in the pulpit is the best work the result of a buoyant, tireless energy. The expenditure of physical life is so much greater in extempore speaking, the nervous strain, the demand for the free and spontaneous response to the will, that only a full physical life can meet the demand.

> "The frame so weak, sharp sickness hue,
> And this pale cheek God loves in you,"

is no longer the misconception of the ministry. But the development of a frail body into manly vigor, the daily discipline of food and sleep and exercise that shall keep the physical life at the

highest, the daily training of the voice that shall make it the best instrument of the soul — this is often neglected by the pressure of duty or by sheer laziness; and this discipline is the condition of the highest success in extempore preaching.

A second condition is the development and mastery of the mental powers. Good extempore speaking is intellectual work of the highest and hardest kind. A man needs to gain the power of logical and consecutive thinking, the self-mastery that shall not be deterred or deflected by any circumstance, the alertness of mind to perceive the need of men and respond to it. All that cultivates the reasoning powers, all that makes a well-furnished mind, comes into play. The difficulty of expression is psychical not physical. And the *will* must be strong to command the other faculties to do their work. The will is at fault where men fail to do their best and to hold the attention of the audience. "The public speaker is dependent upon himself for the use of his will, for knowing what he is about, for making the most of himself, for the physical and mental conditions essential to his success." [1]

It is a mistake to think that natural fluency

[1] Nathan Sheppard, "Before an Audience," p. 41.

is necessary for good speaking. Such gifts are often allied with a fatal indolence. "Eloquence is a gift which the Lord does not often use much for His purposes; it is a prancing palfrey which the Son of man rarely rides. . . . Natural eloquence may easily be a snare to a preacher. Words may come so abundantly that he will not wait to hear the word of the Lord."[1]

Success can only be gained after long and strenuous discipline. Training finds its highest end in preaching; the preacher is the whole man speaking.

There is also the need of the hard and constant study of the materials of sermons. The time saved from writing must be devoted to the study of the Bible and the mastery of great books of religion and literature. "The preacher determines to deliver his sermon extempore: is this to exempt him from preparation, from arrangement, from the selection of those words which will most happily and comprehensively convey his meaning? In this case, also, is there not to be labor? — labor, the text turns in your soul, does it not? It is like a fire in the bones. It requires more study to do justice to unwritten than to written ser-

[1] Horton, "Verbum Dei," p. 176.

mons."[1] And Alexander Maclaren makes the same testimony, that his method is no saving of labor.

A clear and full outline is another requisite for extempore preaching. More material is needed than in written sermons to meet emergencies, and the detailed steps are to be planned that the discourse may not lack in clearness and order. The plan should be a working plan, and so thoroughly memorized that it will come to mind without conscious effort. Any failure to recall is good evidence of a lack of order in the thought. The plan should be memorized, for the use of notes may be as much of a hindrance to the free expression of the man and the message as the use of a manuscript.

It may be helpful to write critical sentences, as the closing words of an argument or an illustration on which the impression of truth depends. Mr. Bright always wrote his introductions as it gave him assurance of a good beginning, and the habit never interfered with his freedom.

Let the language be from the moment. Make no effort to recall words. Never criticise your own words in the act of speaking. Do not repeat because of trifling mistake. Grasp the thought

[1] Paxton-Hood, "Lamps, Pitchers, and Trumpets," p. 110.

firmly and let the sentences care for themselves. Pitt said to a young man struggling with his first speeches in the House of Commons: "My Lord, you are not so successful as you ought to be, and the reason, as I conceive, is this: you are more anxious about words than about ideas. You do not consider that if you are thinking of words, you will have no ideas; but if you have ideas, words will come of themselves."

Be a constant student of style. Clear, strong, racy, picturesque, musical English is to be a lifelong discipline. Get words, not remarkable ones, but common words and pure that escape the thought. "There is no reason why, when you have at your service the noblest language for an orator that was ever spoken by the human race, you should be satisfied with the threadbare phrases, the tawdry, tarnished finery, the patched and ragged garments with the smell like that of the stock of a second-hand clothes shop, with which half-educated and ambitious declaimers are content to cover the nakedness of their thought. You can do something better than this, and you should resolve to do it." [1]

Finally, forget not the spiritual conditions

[1] Dale, "Yale Lectures," p. 171.

of meditation and prayer and a faithful life, the sense of man's need and the divineness of the word, above all, the assurance of the presence of the Christ. All preaching needs this, especially the preaching that leans upon no outward helps. "It will inspire in us the true enthusiasm — the God within us — which is like the flame shining within the transparent vase, and revealing itself through all exterior lines and tints. When this is kindled and constantly burns in any soul, it makes effort easy, success sure; it is itself a power for God, manifesting His glory through all the faculties which His Spirit illumines." [1]

Other Methods. — The *memoriter* method has been common in the Scotch pulpit and is practised by many in our own land. It adds the virtue of better speaking to the written sermon. It has the disadvantage of training the memory, sometimes at the expense of other faculties more important. An equal demand upon the reasoning powers would make an effective extemporaneous preacher. Then memoriter speaking rarely has the virtues of the extemporaneous. The mind is too absorbed in recollecting to give itself to the power of the truth or the needs of

[1] Storrs, "Preaching without Notes," p. 188.

an audience, and the speaking is apt to have a tone of declamation that lacks the directness and spontaneity of life.

Free speaking after writing.

The message is carefully written out, often more written than can be spoken ; then a speaking outline is made and committed to memory, the sermon carefully thought through and then spoken without notes. It combines most of the advantages of the written and extemporaneous methods. There are the accuracy and fulness of thought, the training in expression, and the freedom and naturalness of speaking. At first the preacher will be hampered by the attempt to remember, but this will pass away by experience, as the man is able to give himself more fully to the quickening influence of thinking and speaking the truth. There must be no conscious effort to recollect. It is a costly method in every way, and effective in proportion to the cost.

Suggestions as to *personal method.*

Each man should follow what he can do the best. The choice should not be a matter of accident or thoughtlessness, but the result of experience and self-knowledge. While freedom and ease are always to be desired, the man must not follow the line of least resistance.

The easiest method may not be the best in the end. Unless a young man write somewhat on his sermons, he will find little time to write at all. And unless he write, he will hardly grow in the use of speech. Therefore, it seems the part of wisdom, for the early years of one's ministry, to write some of the sermons, whatever be the method of delivery, and to make only a plan for others. In this way the preacher will come to himself and his kingdom.

LECTURE XVI

THE ORAL STYLE

OUTLINE

1. The essay and the sermon.
   - *a* The good sermon style more difficult. The preacher must hold the attention and quicken the interest of men. The two styles, to a degree, exclude each other.
   - *b* The small literature upon the subject.
2. Examples of the oral style: Wendell Phillips, Alexander Maclaren, R. D. Hitchcock.
3. Marks of the oral style.
   - *a* It has the personal marks of a conversation.
   - *b* Short and simple sentences will prevail. The structure will be broken by sudden flashes of thought and feeling.
   - *c* Means to prepare the course of the thought and hold attention. Announcement of plan, conversational clauses and repetition for the sake of clearness and force.
   - *d* The speech will be more pictorial; the more frequent use of figures of thought and structure.
   - *e* The frequent use of the interrogative is implied in the sermon as a conversation.
     1. The interrogative appeals to the intelligence of the hearers.
     2. It is a personal appeal. The questions must be such as would get an immediate answer.
     3. Questions keep the audience before the preacher, help him to speak, and compel variety in the use of the voice.
4. Suggestions.
   - *a* The formation of sentences determines the mode of their delivery. You cannot speak an essay.
   - *b* While preparing a sermon realize the presence of an audience. Examples of Chalmers, Guthrie, Lyman Beecher, R. D. Hitchcock. Eloquence is a social virtue. "The sermon is not to be something but to do something." The expectant, yearning faces of the people, in their toil and struggle, their sin and suffering, their hope and fears, should haunt the pastor as, with pen in hand, he is trying to answer their appeal and provide for their living needs.

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LECTURE XVI

THE ORAL STYLE

Is there a true distinction between the *oral style* and the *essay style?* I am sure that we all feel that there is; but can it be stated so clearly that it will form a working theory of life? That's the question.

The Essay and the Sermon. — Our studies, our habits of thought, as far as they affect our style, inevitably tend to the essay style: that is, a style that is formed for the eye and satisfies the intellectual nature. A young man is more familiar with books than the hearts of men. The thoughts that have stirred him, moulded him, have come through books. Whether he will or not, he is thus far especially interested in truths — the interest in individual lives is a purpose — not yet the motive of all the thinking and speaking. And so the natural tendency is to write to the eye rather than the ear, and some men go out of the seminary and on through the years of their

ministry preaching essays, but not in the best sense sermons. I would like to save you, if possible, from a false ideal, and so from a needless limitation of power.

To write so that it can be easily read is a different thing — an easier thing — than to write so that it can be easily heard. When men sit down to read, they feel some responsibility for attention. They are willing to reread and ponder to get the exact thought. But is it so with the listener? We know that the speaker must not only hold but quicken interest and attention. The audience often assume that the responsibility of attention is with the preacher. And he must therefore use those elements of style that open the ear-gate, and keep it open. To write for the ear rather than the eye is a maxim of gold for the preacher.

In fact, men go so far as to say that the two styles largely exclude each other. "Reading sermons," says Phillips Brooks, "is like listening to an echo. The words are there, but the personal intonation is gone out of them and there is an unreality about it all. Now and then you find sermons which do not suggest their ever having been preached, and they give you none of this feeling. But they were not good sermons, scarcely even real sermons, when

they were preached. In general, it is true that the sermon which is good to preach is poor to read, and the sermon which is good to read is poor to preach."

What has been written on this important matter of the difference between oral and essay style? Very little, and that but fragmentary, you will have to say, after a study of the principal works on Homiletics.

Dr. Broadus has but a single reference under the general observations on style, p. 338. He is writing of practice in speaking as a means of good style. "A man may closely imitate in writing the style of speaking, but the two are really distinct." (This cannot be accepted as necessarily true.) "Let one always have a practical purpose, and throw himself into an effort, not to make a discourse, but to accomplish his object. Let him closely observe his hearers, and learn to perceive when they understand and are impressed. He will thus become able to judge when to be diffuse and when rapid, and will acquire the directness of address, the power of constant movement toward a fixed point, the passionate energy and unstudied grace, the flexibility and variety which characterize the speaking style."

Dr. Phelps, in his "English Style in Public

Discourse," speaks of the effect of delivery on style, in which he touches a part of the question, p. 316 :

"You write a sermon addressed to one man in your audience; you know his spiritual condition ; you have in mind the locality in which he sits in church ; you have his countenance before you as you write ; you preach not only about him but to him ; you foresee that in the application of your discourse you shall rise to your full height, and lift your voice, or lower it, to its most earnest key, and shall endeavor by look and tone and gesture and attitude to make him feel that you mean him. Do you think it possible that you can have that scene before you in prophetic vision, and with the moral sensibilities appropriate to it alert in your heart, and yet can sit with the dulness of a clam at your study table, and reel off a style like 'Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Reuben,' and so on? 'No style is worth a farthing,' quoting from Mr. Hazlitt, which will not bear comparison with spiritual colloquy." Again, on p. 340, Dr. Phelps touches some points of oral style in the discussion of naturalness.

"Precisely what it is," he says, "which constitutes the peculiarity of the oral style, criti-

cism cannot easily define. But in any striking example of it we detect several features. One is the predominance of concrete over abstract words in its vocabulary. Oral discourse is essentially pictorial in its nature. . . . Again, the oral style inclines to a large excess of simplicity over involution in the construction of sentences. We extemporize in shorter sentences, more simply framed sentences, with less of inversion and introversion, and suspension of the sense. . . . One other feature in the style natural to oral discourse is the dramatic quality, which makes the hearer active in the discussion of a subject. This partakes of the nature of colloquy in effect, though not colloquy in form."

Many good stories are told of the effect of such dramatic qualities in preaching. Guthrie was describing a shipwreck with such lifelike power that a young sailor in the gallery jumped to his feet, threw off his jacket, and shouted, "For God's sake, man the life-boat."

In the volume, "Men and Books," p. 221, Dr. Phelps asks, "What is it in oral speech which distinguishes it from the essay?" And he gives the answer by two practical examples, and then draws the conclusion that in the one the man talks and in the other he soliloquizes.

"How can a student avoid the essay style, since he lacks one of the great helps to an oratorical style, a particular audience of his own, for whose conversion and spiritual culture he feels always responsible? Therefore I would say, let a man whenever he sits down to write, call up his audience, one by one, remember the object of all preaching, to persuade to right belief and behavior, and pray and pray and pray again, that this particular discourse may be so framed as to commend the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Let a man, in the seminary, form the determination, as Dr. Upson used to say, always to 'preach from his own deficiency,' then he will supply others' deficiencies. Let him preach truth just as fast as he lives it out in actual experience. Intense personal conviction will flame out in burning utterance. The law of sacred oratory is, 'I believed and *therefore* have I spoken.' If a man can write without shaking his head, gesturing with his pen, now and then pacing the floor, something is wrong. All this on the ethical side of the question.

"On the rhetorical side. It seems to me that an essay should be smooth and graceful in style, while the sermon should have points and angularities, make a wider use of rhetori-

cal figures and forms, deal in concrete images rather than abstractions. Oral discourse must be pictorial, simple, direct, not afraid of homely idioms. The end justifies the means. Anything to get there.

"After all, it's in the man himself, isn't it? Let him cultivate oratorical gifts, then be mastered by his truth, and he must find fit expression. Let him be the ambassador of the *living King*, and he cannot read an essay to the King's subjects. 'His mouth will be as God's mouth,' and, like Him, he will 'speak to the heart of Israel.' Spiritually let him be consumed with the zeal that ate up Christ; rhetorically, let him read Carlyle, and not Macaulay."[1]

Examples of the Oral Style. — Now in order that we apply and test some of the distinctions thus made, let us take extracts from three or four men who have the speaking style.

The first shall be Wendell Phillips, whose very definition of oratory as "animated conversation" is seen in all his speech.

Extract from "The Murder of Lovejoy":[2]

"Presumptuous to assert the freedom of the press on American ground! Is the assertion of such freedom before the age? So much be-

[1] Extract from a private letter. [2] Speeches, p. 9.

fore the age as to leave one no right to make it because it displeases the community? Who invents this libel on his country? It is this very thing that entitles Lovejoy to greater praise. The disputed right which provoked the Revolution — taxation without representation — is far beneath that for which he died.

"One word, gentlemen. As much as thought is better than money, so much is the cause in which Lovejoy died nobler than a mere question of taxes. James Otis thundered in this hall when the king did but touch his pocket. Imagine, if you can, his indignant eloquence, had England offered to put a gag upon his lips."

The next is from Alexander Maclaren, the sermon on "The Awakening of Zion," from the volume, "The Secret of Power." "Thank God for the outpouring of the long-unwonted spirit of prayer in many places. It is like the melting of snows in the high Alps, at once the sign of spring and the cause of filling the stony river beds with flashing waters, that bring verdure and growth wherever they come. The winter has been long and hard. We have all to confess that we have been restraining prayer before God. Our work has been done with but little sense of our need of his blessing, with but little ardor of desire for his power.

We have prayed lazily, scarcely believing that an answer would come; we have not watched for the reply, but have been like some heartless marksman who draws his bow and does not care to look whether his arrow strikes the target. These mechanical words, these conventional petitions, these syllables winged by no real desire, inspired by no faith; these expressions of devotion, far too wide for their contents, which rattle in them like a dried kernel in a nut — are these prayers? Is there any wonder that they have been dispersed in empty air, and that we have been put to shame before our enemies? Brethren, in the ministry, do we need to be surprised at our fruitless work, when we think of our prayerless studies and of our faithless prayers?"

One more extract will be enough for our purpose, and this will be from Dr. Roswell D. Hitchcock — the sermon on "The Staff of Life," from the volume, "Eternal Atonement." "Purer in doctrine than papal Europe, and in most respects, no doubt, purer also in morals, more intelligent, more industrious, more enterprising, and consequently more prosperous, Protestant Europe is nevertheless in the heat of a raging fever, her very vitals burning with the lust of gain. England, especially, suffers under the

ravages of this vehement disease. For generations has she been applauded by the grateful nations, as the bulwark of Protestantism and the dauntless evangelist of freedom. But look on England to-day, the England that speaks to us through Liverpool and Manchester, her stout hand not upon her heart but upon her pocket. If this be our Protestant brotherhood, this the fellowship of nations, which have stood together for the freedom of the world, well may we hang our heads in bitter shame as we remember even the crusades of the Middle Ages. These, at least, were a gallant frenzy, a generous fanaticism, while we have fallen upon times of ignoble selfishness and greed. Tell us, ye British statesmen, tell us, ye sordid sons of heroic sires, are constitutions only parchments? Are nations only herds of farmers, artisans, and traders? Are our fathers' graves only mounds of earth, and our children's cradles mere upholstery? Is chartered freedom only sounding rhetoric? Is duty only a name? Is honor dead? Has the Almighty abdicated? And is there nothing for us in the nineteenth century but to delve and spin and trade, to clutch and hoard, to eat and drink and bloat and rot and die, and make no sign?"

Marks of the Oral Style. — We have these different suggestions, and these examples of effective address; what shall we say, then, are some of the marks of the oral style?

It has the *personal* marks of a conversation. The first person, singular or plural, is to be used naturally and modestly as in any dignified conversation. And the second person, the word of direct address, will be used often enough to make the audience feel that they are the direct object of the sermon and must have personal interest in it.

Short and simple sentences will prevail. The sentences will be broken with sudden gleams of thought and emotion. But clauses that needlessly qualify and suspend the thought will be omitted. The oral style will have directness and movement.

There will be more means used to prepare the course of the thought and hold attention, as the announcement of plan and points, and conversational clauses that easily and clearly carry on the connection of thought from one sentence to another. And then repetition in the way of summing up argument or points made, and repeating the same thought in new form and illustration both for clearness and added weight of impression. Notice especially

the effect of repetition in the summary beginning, "These mechanical words," etc.

The speech will be more pictorial: the more frequent use of figures of thought and structure. Balanced phrases will be found. Antithesis will make the truth more striking. Frequent cumulation of phrases will be common toward the end of a passage. And those forms that express feeling and inquiry — the exclamation and interrogation — will be a natural and necessary expression. Notice the power of the interrogation in the extracts from Wendell Phillips and Dr. Hitchcock.

The frequent use of the interrogation is especially true to the oral style. It is involved in the very idea of the sermon as a conversation.

The interrogation expresses the worth of the hearer. It appeals to his intelligence, and believes in his capacity. It expresses the desire for the response of the audience, and so they are unconsciously drawn toward the preacher.

The interrogation is a *personal appeal* to each hearer. Notice the effect of a keen, direct question upon an audience. How it wins the attention of the listless and stirs the sluggish! Of course the questions must be such as would get an immediate answer from the intelligence of men, or from the previous discussion. If

they suggest problems difficult or unanswerable, they may so divert and absorb the mind as to render it insensible to the rest of the sermon.

Then questions must sometimes be answered — the preacher representing the audience, and so carrying on a brief dialogue.

Questions compel variety in the use of the voice, remind the speaker of the audience, will help him to speak, not read, and so bind speaker and hearer together that through these personal ties the truth may find its way from heart to heart.

Two Suggestions in Conclusion. — It is a principle that the formation of sentences determines the mode of their delivery. There can be a natural variety in speaking only as there is variety in writing. You cannot speak an essay. The style must have the oral qualities if the sermon is to have the delivery of natural speech.

While you are preparing the sermon, do everything that you can to realize the presence of an audience. If you have no particular audience, imagine one. Even project yourself and preach to that. Dr. Chalmers always felt that his study was crowded with his people and he wrote directly to them. Dr. Guthrie wrote aloud in the study of his church. And when

the fire burned low and the work grew hard, he left his study, entered the church, mounted the pulpit, and with his marvellous imagination pictured the multitude that Sabbath to Sabbath hung upon his word; pictured their sins and sorrows and hopes; and with this picture of human need in his heart, he went back to his study with a divine baptism. Rufus Choate said, "A speech is to be written as in and for the presence of an audience." Lyman Beecher wrote with one hand and gestured with the other, his lips moving in whispered utterance of what he was writing. "I always write aloud," said Dr. Hitchcock. Eloquence is a social virtue. "The sermon is not to *be* something, but to *do* something, — to instruct, to convince, to persuade, to rebuke or comfort people who are toiling, struggling, tempted, sinning, suffering, sorrowing, — and whose expectant, yearning faces turn toward the pastor and should haunt and help him, as with pen in hand he is trying to answer their appeal and provide for their living needs."

LECTURE XVII

THE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE SPEAKING

OUTLINE

The personal and the impersonal; the personal inseparably connected with the man, and only slightly communicable; the impersonal can be stated in general laws and acquired by practice.

1. The personal elements. Their source in nature, the expression of character.
   - *a* The personal quality of the voice, its relation to character. Training should develop, not destroy, the personal quality.
   - *b* The personal quality of the action. Every man should be known by his manner. Cultivation of taste, laws of gesture, must not weaken individuality. In all things be natural, your best self.
   - *c* The distinction between dramatic and practical elocution.
2. The impersonal elements. The elements that belong to the best public speech, and can be expressed in laws.
   - *a* Distinctness. It is to speech what clearness is to style. Speaking so that men will understand.
     1. Enunciation, fine, clear, full. The sins of public speech in this respect.
     2. Proper pronunciation.
     3. Opposed to misplaced and false emphasis.
     4. Sufficient volume of voice.
   - *b* Simplicity. A relative quality. Opposed to the affected, the artificial, and the sensational. Takes hold upon the grace of humility. The art of speaking is to be simple and chaste.
   - *c* Directness. Simplicity has chief reference to the thought, directness to the purpose and the audience.
     1. The consciousness of directness helpful to the intellectual and spiritual activity of the preacher.
     2. It will be a corrective and stimulus to the rhetorical form of the sermon.
     3. It will prevent some natural defects of delivery.
   - *d* Earnestness. Demands volume of voice to make truth impressive, and vitality of tone and manner to get and keep the attention of the audience. Earnest conversation the ideal of the pulpit. The difference of natures. The physical element in earnestness. The use of the will.
   - *e* Adaptability. The harmony of the inner and the outer world in speaking, the graduation of voice and manner to thought and feeling and the needs of men. It demands the training and control of the whole person. The special training of the voice, the ear, and the taste.

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LECTURE XVII

THE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE SPEAKING

WHAT are the elements of effective speaking? It is evident that they fall into two divisions, — the personal and the impersonal. The personal are inseparably connected with the man, hard to define, at times almost elude analysis, and are only in a slight degree communicable. The impersonal belong to all public speech, can be reduced to laws, and can be gained by practice.

The Personal Elements. — The personal elements have their source in nature; they are the expression of character. Lincoln's strong, homely, patient logic, directed by his clear-grained sincerity and lighted at times with poetic fervor, his quaint, kindly humor, were expressed in voice and manner and made him the trusted and powerful master of assemblies. Charles Sumner's breadth of nature and

culture, his sensitiveness to the highest things in life and art, combined with a critical acumen that gave him a scorn of the unworthy and indifference to popular influence, — all these were felt in his speech, — a speech that was not the delight of the people, but the fearless and commanding voice of the Senate. The strong, logical nature of Finney made his speech direct, sharp, and incisive, cutting its way to the conscience of his hearers. The robustness of Spurgeon, his grasp of truth, sustaining great emotions, laid its masterful spell upon the thousands that listened to his words. The spiritual insight of a Robertson or a Maclaren, their subtle perception of hidden relations and analogies, their bodying forth of the complex motives, the shadowy visions of our natures, make them the suggestive and inspiring teachers of their generation.

All this may be said, and we have suggested, not analyzed, their power over men. Back of all is the heart and brain, the thinking and willing and throbbing personality, that gives itself with its speech, in the language of the Apostle, "willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls." The highest element of speech is personal. The best speech is

always costly; it is the gift of physical and psychic and spiritual vitality.

There are elements in delivery itself as individual and incommunicable as the personality.

Every voice has its personal quality. It has some invisible, undefinable relation to the character. It finds the friendly ear amid a babel of sounds. "The voice is Jacob's, though the hand is Esau's." You may strike the same note on the flute, the violin, the cornet, the piano, the organ, and each instrument will give forth its distinct and differing sound. It is the individual quality that gives the power of orchestral harmony. Voices differ still more widely, and the infinite variety of quality gives to speech its attractiveness and power. Training should never touch this personal element of the voice; in as far as it does so, it is pernicious. The tone may be made pure, the words properly and distinctly formed, the range and volume greatly increased, the voice developed, and yet the personality not marred or lost; in fact, the personality more fully brought out.

The same is true of the *action* of the speaker. The action should fit the word, as the word the man. As every man is known by his walk, so

every speaker should be known by his manner and gesture. John Randolph became known by the action of his long, bony finger. It indexed the flashing, vehement utterance of this son of Virginia. The slow, awkward movements of Lincoln, so expressive of the homely logic and homely wit of the man, you would not change it if you could for the grace and elegance of Edward Everett. Such oratorical trimming would be the shearing of Samson's locks. The very ruggedness of some men is their strength.

Now there are certain laws for gesture. There is a relation between thought and passion and the action of the speaker. There is a proper, respectful, manly position for the man to take before his audience. The perception of taste — the fitness of things — can be cultivated. The extravagant, the offensive, the inappropriate and inexpressive can be removed. But the instinctive and unconscious expression of the man in his action should never be fettered by needless laws or destroyed by the imitation of others.

The matter of the personal elements of effective delivery may be summed up by saying, Be natural, be yourselves, and you will not misunderstand the meaning of naturalness.

You will not make it synonymous with personal eccentricity and defect. Rather is it the best expression in accordance with each man's nature.

Your speech is to make others see and feel as you do. You have two instruments of self-expression, — the voice and the action. The voice finds the ear. The face and gesture find the eye. The soul may flash upon the face the light of its thought and passion, and motion may interpret and enforce. Happy the speaker in whom all the personal elements of expression unite, who speaks with the whole man.

It is a fatal mistake to try to make a man over into some one else. The result is likely to be an inferior copy, and that, too, a soulless one. If the training aims only at imitation, it is a singular fact that the defects are the surest to be imitated, and that in an exaggerated form. So that the pupil is no more like the master than Nast's cartoons were like Horace Greeley, or the caricatures of Punch resembled William E. Gladstone.

Any procrustean system of elocution will merit the reproach of pernicious training. It fetters, not emancipates, the man.

And this suggests the broad distinction be-

tween a dramatic elocution and a practical elocution. The former expresses passion; the latter all forms of thought and feeling. The one requires a voice of peculiar quality and compass; the other takes all voices into its service. The first assumes for the time another character and voice; the last maintains its own person in all speech. There is a place for dramatic elocution in pulpit speech: the tragedy of human life could not be portrayed without it. But it is only a phase of the training which should fit the minister for the adaptation of varying thought and occasion. The best elocutionary training for the pulpit is that in harmony with all true education, not filling or imposing upon, but drawing forth the utmost capacity. It should make the individual powers free and facile. It is personal in its aim and method, working for the best expression of the individual man.

Having said thus much concerning effective pulpit speaking, that which elocution cannot affect, and ought never to attempt, let us advance to the things which are in the province of training, which can be gained by training.

The Impersonal Elements. — What are the impersonal elements of effective delivery, the

elements that belong to the best pulpit speech, that can be reduced to laws and can be attained by the obedience to laws?

I would name distinctness, simplicity, directness, earnestness, and adaptability.

These are not matters of mere taste and culture, to be lightly accepted or discarded, but fundamental and essential. I do not mean that no preacher can be successful without all of them, but he must excel in some one of them, and all are essential to the highest excellence.

Distinctness is the *first* element, first in natural order and the order of importance.

It is to speech what clearness is to style. Clearness means that words are to be so chosen and arranged that men not only may understand, but must understand. And so distinctness demands the speaking of words and sentences in a way that men must understand as well as may: not may with fixed and strained attention, but must without serious mental effort.

The first requirement of distinctness is *enunciation*, — fine, clear, full enunciation. It belongs to the primary elements of speech, to the vowel and consonant sounds, to their union in syllables. The vowels determine the number and

tone of the syllables, the consonants their limits. The first are the windows of thought to be made clear and pure, the second the frames, distinct and well defined. And here the sins of pulpit speech are the most common. There is a carelessness about the syllable as though it were a trifle, — it is wholly cut out, or run into some other syllable, or blurred or cut short. We cannot afford to neglect any part of our noble English speech, to fail in painstaking to make every word a jewel, clear-cut and luminous. I do not mean a care that seems overnice and affected, but an honest and faithful effort to give each word its accurate place and meaning. There will be great difference in the ease with which men attain distinctness of enunciation. It will depend upon nature, the natural shape of mouth, the position of teeth, the thickness or thinness of the lips; upon early surroundings, the unconscious training of home life; but no man, unless tongue-tied, can fail of proper enunciation if he will give himself to it.

Distinctness includes *proper pronunciation:* not only the clear and full sound of each syllable, but the proper sound of the word and the accent in the proper place. The attention is lost if the hearer stops to interpret the wrong

sound or stress. The sympathy and respect are lost if vulgar words and incorrect words come from the lips of him who is to be the intellectual as well as spiritual leader of the people. He is to teach men truth, and his position must not be weakened by signs of careless ignorance. Many a hearer has been fatally prejudiced against a worthy and influential minister, because of his slovenly habit of wrong words and sounds.

"I would have you zealous, like the Apostle over the Church, over these pure wells of English undefiled; degrade not our sacred tongue by slang; defile not its crystal streams with the foul waters of careless speech; honor its stern old parentage, obey its simple yet severe grammar, watch its perfect rhythm, and never mix its blue blood, the gift of noblest sires, with the base puddle of any mongrel race; never speak half the language of Ashdod and half of Canaan, but be ye of a pure English lip."[1]

Distinctness is furthermore opposed to *misplaced* and *excessive emphasis*, whereby the thought is wrested from its natural connection, or covered up by undue attention to some dependent phase and condition of

[1] J. S. MacIntosh, D.D.

thought. In style, obscurity may come from faulty arrangement as well as choice of words. And in speaking, the voice must indicate the principal and dependent, the important and secondary in the thought, or the result will be an incorrect or indistinct impression upon the mind of the hearer.

And distinctness must mean *enough volume* of voice to be heard with ease by the farthest in the audience. The most spiritual and patient listener will soon tire of straining the ear to detect some familiar sound. The hunger for the word cannot be satisfied with an occasional crumb.

It is true that the matter of distinctness does not depend wholly on the amount of voice — the fulness of tone. One may use too much voice as well as too little. And the rate of speaking and a certain projectile quality enter into distinctness, which will be discussed hereafter. But surely too great importance cannot be given to the quality of distinctness. The inertia of masses of men must be taken for granted. If you demand any undue attention to your words in order to understand them, you will fail to hold their interest, instruct, and persuade.

And it must be confessed that many minis-

ters are sinners against this primal grace of pulpit efficiency. So widespread is the lack that the *Homiletic Review* had a series of criticisms on indistinct and improper pronunciation of New York ministers. We may fail in certain graces of pulpit speech, but we have no business to be indistinct.

A second element of effective delivery is *simplicity*. It is a relative quality. The simplicity of Robertson is different from that of Canon Liddon, yet both are simple. It is not only related to the man, but to the subject and the occasion. You would not expect the same kind of simplicity in the sermons of Dr. W. W. Newton, that prince of children's preachers in his "Rills from the Fountain of Life," that you find in the Easter sermons of Phillips Brooks to business men; yet both are very simple. What is simplicity? It is opposed to all motions of voice and body not needed in the best expression of thought and feeling. It is opposed to the affected and artificial and sensational. It despises tricks of voice and manner. It is that elocution that does not call attention to itself, that never parades itself before the audience, that is willing to serve and not seek the honor of men.

Simplicity of delivery may be cultivated by

an honest and rigorous self-criticism — a criticism that shall constantly ask the question, Of what use? Do the thought and feeling demand the inflection or the action? Will men be reached by it? Will they think of the message and feel it? Or will they think most of the wonderful powers of the preacher?

This important quality goes beneath the surface drill of elocution and takes hold upon the Christian grace of humility. The man who is willing to be a servant will cast off the vices of a florid, affected, artificial style.

And it is necessary to speak of it because the minister is especially exposed to the temptations of vanity. He feels the intoxication of leadership. He has the delightful consciousness that hundreds hang upon his words. He may receive the pleasant expressions of appreciation and gratitude. And in all this there is a subtle tendency to exalt self which is fatal to the best effects of pulpit speech.

The art of preaching, like all other true arts, is simple and chaste. "To be much within and little without, to do all for truth, nothing for show, and to express the largest possible meaning with the least possible stress of expression — this is its law."

Another element of effective speech is *direct-*

ness. Simplicity has chief reference to the thought, directness has chief reference to the purpose and the audience. It is opposed to all air of abstraction or introspection, or far-away look or tone.

Directness is involved in the very idea of preaching, address immediate and direct to the people.

It is evident that directness of speech has to do with the spirit and purpose of the speaker. If his interest is chiefly intellectual in the discussion of truth, and his delight in self-expression or the beauty and perfection of form, no training can give him the quality of contact. But if he have a definite end of practical impression, which his discourse is to make on the minds before him, if he have in view individual hearers in the congregation, the direct touch will not be difficult to gain; it will be difficult not to gain it.

The consciousness of directness will be most helpful to the intellectual and spiritual activity of the preacher. "It is necessary," says Dr. Storrs, "in order to enlist his moral nature, ardently, thoroughly, in the work he has to do. Intellectual excitement is relatively without warmth. Intellectual enthusiasm, for a proposition which has no special, practical relation to

those to whom it is being presented, never has the force of real passion. The heating power in the nature of man is in its moral element. This gives the inward glow and vividness to all his intellectual processes, when it inspires them. Power and impulse always come from it."

The aim of directness in pulpit speech will be both a corrective and a stimulus to the rhetorical form of the sermon.

It will give unity and progression and impact to the discourse. The suggested thoughts and illustrations are made confluent, growing in fulness and force to the end.

It will correct the habit of discursiveness, the besetting sin of full minds, that speak without notes. Purpose is the drill-master of order. The needless and irrelevant matter will be ruled out, and the sermon have growth, progress, movement, to the climax of impression.

On the other hand, directness of purpose will keep the sermon from becoming a beautiful and cold essay — an essay that sparkles, to be sure, but with no more heat than the sparkle of the diamond.

Unless the purpose of personal impression governs the speaker, the subprocesses as they are called, the action of thought, the effort at

expression, will be painfully manifested, leading to the worst vices of delivery. The delivery will be lifeless if the sermon be written. In memoriter preaching the voice follows the introspective mind. In extempore preaching the effort to unfold the thought fetters voice and manner. But how intensity of purpose changes all this! What freedom and facility in the action of reason and memory! What swiftness of speech, what self-forgetfulness that adds to the persuasive enthusiasm of the words!

The manner of the pulpit will get its significance from this directness. The sea of faces gives place to the individual to whom the eye speaks and the hand, yes, and the whole man.

And thus the preacher is brought into vital, personal relation with his audience, holds their attention, and exerts direct influence upon them. The purpose of directness is the lens that focusses the mental and moral action so that it becomes intense, concentrated, and effective.

A recent writer says of Rev. John McNeill of Glasgow that "he speaks as though he were talking to men. He is not lacking in oratorical graces, but he does not appear to be thinking of anything but his theme and his audience. There is a self-unconsciousness which is charming, and an absence of all unnatural and artifi-

cial mannerisms that is winning. Mr. McNeill is in the pulpit the same talker that he is in the parlor."

The nature and effect of this practical purpose suggests another element of effective delivery, that of *earnestness*. Earnestness as far as it has to do with delivery means the use of enough force and volume of voice to make all hear without effort and to give the strongest thought and feeling something like adequate expression, so that the address will be impressive. And it further demands a certain animation, vitality of tone and manner, that shall make the audience feel that a live man is speaking. The Kingdom of God grows from within intensively as well as extensively. It is only leaven that can leaven; fire that can kindle fire; a live man that can quicken the dead formalism of the mass. Earnestness in the preacher is the accent of conviction; it is speaking the truth like truth, not like fiction. Garrick, when once asked what was the proper manner of delivery for the pulpit, replied, "That of earnest conversation." "He stood as if pleading with men" is Bunyan's description of the preacher.

I recognize the great difference of natures in this respect: one man always sparkles, while

another sends forth a dull light. Men that have equal conviction of truth, and consecration to duty, and passion for souls, may differ widely in the natural qualities of animation. But vocal earnestness can be cultivated. The dull, immobile face can be made to brighten; the heavy, monotonous tones can be made to change their key and quicken their rate.

There is a physical element in earnestness. An English paper once criticised the clergymen of the Church of England: "Take a Methodist preacher who has something to say and says it with all his heart, set him down in village or city, and he will in a short time fill the commonest and baldest barn. Let a Church of England minister display the same enthusiasm, and he will have as much success." Is it not physical enthusiasm that is often sadly wanting? What earnestness can you expect of an indolent body or a white and emaciated body? We must not allow education to be a system of emasculation. We must not cut the roots of our life. As the tree that sends its roots deepest and widest into the earth will grow farthest toward the heavens, so the highest success in the Gospel ministry — other things equal — will result from the soundest, most vigorous, physical life. The preacher

above all other men needs this full vitality. Lyman Beecher sawed wood and shovelled sand. Spurgeon made wide use of the geologist's hammer. The widespread interest in physical training is one of the most hopeful signs of the times. The words of Horace Bushnell in his sermon on "Duty not measured by our Own Ability" are especially applicable to the gain of physical earnestness by exertion. "The physical weakness of some men will be the great crime of their life, and they will be held answerable for it on the simple ground that they had too little courage and were too self-indulgent to throw themselves on any such undertaking as a true Christian manliness required."

The question may be asked, Shall we feign earnestness of voice and manner, when we do not feel earnest, and when the audience is not in sympathy with such expression? It might as well be asked, Shall we do right when we do not feel like it? Do we omit prayer because in a particular case the heart may not be in it?

It is right to be earnest; such a delivery alone is in keeping with the truth to be expressed, and it is the only way to take captive the hearts of men for the truth of Christ.

A final element of effective delivery may be called *adaptability*.

It is the harmony of the inner and the outer world in speaking; it considers the fitness of time and place; it is the graduation of voice and manner to the varying shade of thought and feeling, and the varying need of the audience.

It is absurd for a man to strain and exhaust himself for a little company that can be reached far better by the ordinary tones of conversation, while to make the great congregation of St. Paul's hear, Canon Liddon had to use his voice to utter exhaustion. One man goes through his sermon with no reserve power, — the constant blare of the trumpet — just the voice to rouse to action, — but too loud for the finer notes of pity and pathos. Another voice pure and musical, delicately expressive of the finer feelings, never swells in triumph or strikes sharp and strong the blows of indignation and judgment.

Now it is evident that the highest pulpit efficiency demands a varied use, a wise adaptation to the necessities of thought and person. The delivery must be versatile and many-sided.

It goes without saying that adaptability demands the training and control of the organs of speech, in fact, the whole person. And even more vitally, I think, does it depend upon a culti-

vated judgment. The ear must be trained and the taste formed for right and fitting expression. We must not be afraid of criticism, especially of honest and rigorous self-criticism. We must keep track of ourselves, know what we are about, until the standard is clear and fixed, and the obedience becomes natural; then to lose self in the mastery of thought and the passion to help men is both a joy and a power.

I am sure that the qualities here named will commend themselves to all thoughtful minds as the essential elements of the highest pulpit efficiency. How shall we possess them? The answer points to the way of patient exercise and growth.

And along the pathway of attainment I know of no single faculty whose use is so constantly demanded as the *will*.

A bad tone is a vice — to be cured like any other vice — by the use of the will.

A slovenly formation of words, indistinct, precipitant, slurring articulation, is a physical defect, the result of carelessness or anxiety. It can be cured by turning the will upon the vocal organs, and controlling them and compelling them to do their proper work.

Wendell Phillips once said to a friend that he learned how to make an audience hear and

heed him by their attempt to make him hear and heed them. The more they would not listen, the more he determined that they should hear what he had to say. It was a rare training in distinctness, in articulate earnestness, in self-reliance, in the use of the will. And I mention him here as the shining example of what a passionate and exclusive devotion to public speaking will accomplish — how this art, the only one used by Him who spake as never man spake, will reward its faithful servants.

The exercise of the will is sometimes slow in bearing fruit. Success comes slowly, and despair sometimes comes before success. But we will not lower our ideal because it is still far in the advance. We will bring a consecrated will to bear upon our faculties of speech that they may be trained into the highest efficiency.

It is well for a minister to repeat for his moral strength (and the words apply to the art of pulpit speech as truly as to any other art) the Sonnet of Wordsworth to his young friend Haydon:

> "High is our calling, Friend! Creative Art
> (Whether the instrument of words she use
> Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues)
> Demands the service of a mind and heart,
> Though sensitive, yet, in their weakest part,

Heroically fashioned — to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert.
And oh! when Nature sinks, as oft she may,
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
And in the soul admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness —
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard!"

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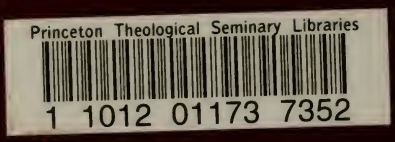
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